DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 448 064 SO 028 863

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TITLE Magnificent, Mysterious Mexico. Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminars Abroad Program, 1996 (Mexico).
SPONS AGENCY Center for International Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 1996-00-00
NOTE 71p.; Photographs may not reproduce adequately.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Area Studies; Cultural Awareness; Foreign Countries; Geography; *Latin American Culture; *Latin American History; Latin Americans; *Mexicans; Multicultural Education; Secondary Education; Social Studies
IDENTIFIERS Fulbright Hays Seminars Abroad Program; *Mexico

ABSTRACT

This packet provides an overview of historical and contemporary Mexico. The interdisciplinary lessons for grades 7-12 include history, geography, art, cooperative learning activities, and map work. Worksheets are included. (EH)

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Magnificent, Mysterious Mexico. Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar Abroad 1996 (Mexico).

by Becky White Skene

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Published: 1996

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MAGNIFICENT, MYSTERIOUS MEXICO

FULBRIGHT-HAYS SUMMER SEMINAR - 1996

BECKY WHITE SKENE

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MAGNIFICENT, MYSTERIOUS MEXICO

"The old man -- not really his father -- was a field-worker, always far away, in the Rio Grande valley, in Colorado, Indiana, California, Oregon, and in the Texas cotton. An invisible man, working, working, away in the north, sending small amounts of money home, sometimes returning for a few months, a crooked-backed man with great scarred hands and a drawn, toothless mouth. That poor man a machine for working, the bruised hands crooked for seizing and pulling, for lifting boxes and baskets, for grasping. The arms hung uncomfortably when work stopped. He was made for work, eyes squinted shut, the face empty of the luxury of reflection, mouth a hole, stubbled cheeks, a filthy baseball cap, wearing a cast-off shirt until it rotted away. If he had beauty in his life, no one knew it."

This excerpt from Accordion Crimes written by E. Annie Proulk exemplifies my prior view of the Mexican people, a hard, difficult life, full of sorrows and trials. This stereotype of the Mexican people, however, has been drastically changed. The "crooked-men with great scarred hands" still exist in my vision, but my view of the Mexican people now includes great passion -- passion for family, religion, music, dancing, and life. I have left a country I have grown to love -- *Mi corazon se siente "muy en casa" en Mexico.* I have returned with a deep desire to allow the passionate feelings in my soul to escape more often.

"Wow! I did it! They said it was something that only a few people ever do, and my guide just told me I wouldn't have time to climb them both, but here I am! The sun is shining, the temperature is perfect, and the view is incredible. Sitting at the top of the Pyramid of the Sun I have a fabulous view of the Pyramid of the Moon which I climbed just prior. Catching my breath I stop to gaze on the vast expanse below me called *Teotihuacan,* Aztec ruins west of Mexico City. I marvel at the workmanship and beauty and try to imagine what life would have been like here about 2000 years ago. Many centuries before the Europeans arrived in the "New World" and many mistakenly believe when life began, there were thousands of people living here in *Teotihuacan* where large cities had been built. Activities included agriculture, building, carving, trading with distant areas and the city market, pottery, painting, sculpture, and weaving textiles for clothes. Religion was very important to the people, and the gods they worshipped were associated with life-giving forces. Again, I marvel and wonder at the view below, and feel a deep sense of gratitude that through the generosity of the Fulbright-Hays Mexico/U.S. Commission I am having a tremendous, almost unexplainable experience. There is so much to learn, understand, and appreciate. But here, atop the Pyramid of the Sun, my heart and mind are expanding and Mexico is no longer just a place on a map."

With every gift there is an attached responsibility, and it is my opportunity to share with others this gift of Mexico. My earlier travel journal excerpt describes my feelings of a day in July, but was only one of many fabulous experiences that I had while spending five weeks in Mexico this past summer. This paper is not meant to be a travel-log of the country of Mexico, but a desire to share my vision of Mexico so that individual stereotypes of the Mexican people will transform into a more realistic and understanding view, so that biases and discrimination will be lessened, if not reduced. It represents a collection of information gathered while in Mexico and in my individual research.

GEOGRAPHY OF MEXICO

"Mexico is a land of contrasts. From the vibrant colors woven into the textiles to the stunning hues of the landscape. From mountain ranges that run right up to the ocean's edge to lush tropical jungles and high, snow-capped volcanoes. It is Aztec pyramids that stand like sentinels over modern subway stations. And Mayan ruins that decorate luxury resorts. Above all, it is a proud people in whom runs the blood of the Spanish, the French, and over 150 native groups of peoples who have called Mexico home."[1]

There is a story, perhaps true, perhaps legend, that tells of one named Hernan Cortes, a Spanish explorer who conquered Mexico, who was asked by King Charles V of Spain to describe the land of Mexico. Cortes crumpled a piece of paper and threw it down before the king. The crumpled paper was his response to the question, an answer difficult to put into words, and represented the mountains of Mexico: high and rugged that seem to cover every part of the country.

Mexico has two large mountain ranges: Sierra Madre Occidental that extend along the western coast and the Sierra Madre Oriental that is located on the eastern coast. These two mountain ranges help divide up Mexico into five physical regions: the Central Plateau, the Northern Pacific Coast, the Gulf Coastal Plain, the Southern Pacific Coast, and the Yucatan Peninsula. Shaped somewhat like a horn, Mexico lies between the 14th and 32nd parallels. It shares about a 2000 mile border with the United States to the north and is bounded by Guatemala and Belize to the south. With an area of 1,224,363 square miles, it is about a quarter of the size of the United States. Over 90 million people live in the country of Mexico, with almost a quarter of them (22 million) living within Mexico City, the largest and one of the highest cities in the world. Mexico is made of up 31 states, five of which border the United States: Baja California Norte, Sonora, Chihuahua, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas. Mexico City is located in the *Distrito Federal*, similar to the District of Columbia in the United States.

"Bridging temperate and tropical regions, and lying in the latitudes which contain most of the world's deserts, Mexico has an enormous range of natural environments and vegetation zones. Its rugged, mountainous topography adds to the variety by creating countless microclimates. Despite the potential for great ecological diversity, human impact has been enormous. Before the Spanish conquest, about two-thirds of the country was forested. Today, only one-fifth of the country remains forested, mainly in the south and east. Domesticated grazing animals have pushed the larger animals, such a puma, deer and coyote, into isolated pockets. However, armadillos, rabbits and snakes are common, and the tropical forests of the south and east still harbor (in places) howler and spider monkeys, jaguars, ocelots, tapirs, anteaters, peccaries (a type of wild pig), deer, macaws, toucans, parrots and some tropical reptiles, such as the boa constrictor, though even these habitats are being eroded.

Mexico's climate varies according to its topography. It's hot and humid along the coastal plains on both sides of the country, but inland, at higher elevations, such as Guadalajara or Mexico City, the climate is much drier and more temperate. The hot, wet season is May to October, with the hottest and wettest months falling between June and September over most of the country. The low-lying coastal areas receive more rainfall than elevated inland regions. December to February are generally the coolest months, when north winds can make inland northern Mexico decidedly chilly, with temperatures sometimes approaching freezing."[2]

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[1] Turismo de Mexico, 1994.
[2] Internet: Destination Mexico

HISTORY -- PRE-COLUMBIAN MEXICO --A PAST STILL PRESENT

"Mexico is a country "with a rich and glorious past. When Rome was falling, when Paris was still just an island in the Seine, Mexico's civilization was already flourishing. Here, the original people of Mexico already had advanced knowledge of science, mathematics, astronomy and medicine. They had well-established social and legal systems. And they lived in urban centers that would make today's city planners jealous."[3]

To understand Mexico's history, you need to remember that the ancient past is still important in modern Mexico. As the write William Faulkner put it, 'The past is not dead. It's not even past.' Before the Spanish explorers came to this land of Mexico in 1519 there were an estimated 10 million Indian inhabitants who had been living under an organized social structure for over 3,000 years. The Spanish realized they couldn't sweep this civilization aside so they built their Colonial empire upon the existing culture. "Which is why Mexico's past wasn't erased. Instead, the Indian culture merged with Spain's. The result is that there are over 20 million Native Mexicans here speaking nearly 60 languages and dialects. And they are all descendants of those ancient citizens."[4]

According to archeologists, the first people are believed to arrived in America from Asia across the Bering Strait as early as 50,000 BC. The descendants of these earliest people built highly developed civilizations which flourished from 1200 BC to 1521 AD.

"Some 3000 years ago, at the southern edge of the Gulf of Mexico, the **OLMECS** emerged as the first great civilization in Mesoamerica. This mother culture flourished until around 400 BC, and its achievements influenced other civilizations (notably those of Monte Alban, the Maya, and the Aztecs). Their class system, with power and knowledge concentrated in a single group, was the prototype for later societies."[5]

About 2000 BC the first villages were established and crops such as beans, corn and squash were cultivated. Archaeological excavations have discovered objects in clay: female figurines related to fertility cults, pottery and tools in stone and bone. Many of these were found in the floor of huts as offerings to the dead. "Significant changes took place between the years 1000 and 100 BC, when commerce with far-off regions began, resulting in the diffusion of new elements and enriching the local cultures. Religious concepts became more complex, expressed in ceremonial architecture, the representations of the first gods, rites such as the game of pelota, and progressing astronomical knowledge, which led to a calendar whose scope was agricultural and ritual, and the invention of writing to record it."[6]

The Classical Period (100 BC to 900 AD) is considered the height of the early civilizations and witnessed the development of a highly advanced culture. Great religious centers and cities arose, "covering wide areas with orderly constructions furnished with patios and plazas, oriented along

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[3] Turismo de Mexico, 1994.
[4] Turismo de Mexico, 1994.
[5] Mexico. Thomas Cook. Passport Press, 1995. pg. 16.
[6] Archaeological Mexico, Marcia Castro Leal. Bonechi, 1995. Pg. 6.

predetermine axes based on the cardinal points, evidence of a long tradition in the study of the stars. The finest example of this period is **Teotithuacan,** the "City of the Gods", so called for its legends and size -- as shown by the fact that it extended over all of 40 square km. A city like Teotithuacan is the result of a society that is highly evolved in its social, as well as political, and religious organizations, with an economy that was sound enough to support priests, builders, painters, sculptors, potters, etc. The governing class at its head probably consisted of priest-kings who monopolized the use of the large constructions and art in general and controlled the manufacture and commercialization of the products as well as knowledge of the stars, writing, the use of the calendar and the rites and ceremonies dedicated to the gods."[7]

"Teotihuacan had systems for utilizing underground water and collecting rain, drains, artisans' workshops, dwelling complexes, markets, streets, temples, palaces, a large ceremonial center and districts where members of other Mesoamerican groups lived who had moved into the city. It was possible to build the large structures thanks to the numerous work force available and the priestly class. The latter, in addition to performing ceremonies and rites organized work and were in control of politics, administration and the economy. This was the social stratification and the division of productive labor....

"Religion occupied a position of prime importance, and the gods worshipped were associated with water, the earth and fertility. They included *Tlaloc*, the god of Rain, *Chalchiutlicue*, the goddess of Water, and *Quetzalcoatl*, the Feathered Serpent. The gods show the basic religious preoccupation's of the Teotihuacanos and were represented in sculptures, clay figurines and mural paintings."[8]

"Teotihuacan was a true city in that many classes of people lived and worked there. Its people were literate, and used the bar-and-dot number system and the 260-day sacred year. Teotihuacan became an imperialistic state after 400 AD. At its peak it may have controlled the southern two-thirds of Mexico, all of Guatemala and Belize and bits of Honduras and El Salvador. But it was an empire geared to tribute-gathering in order to feed the mouths and tastes of Teotihuacan's big population, rather than a full-scale occupation. In the 7th-century, the heart of Teotihuacan was put to the torch and the city was plundered and largely abandoned. It is likely that the state had already been economically weakened -- perhaps by the rise of rival powers in central Mexico, by a drying-up of the climate or by desiccation caused by the denuding of the surrounding hillsides for wood. Teotihuacan's influence on Mexico's later cultures was huge. Many of its gods, such as the feathered serpent Quetzalcoatl, an all-important symbol of fertility, and Tlaloc, the rain god, were still being worshipped by the Aztecs a millennium later."[9]

"After lengthy migrations from the north of Mesoamerica, the **AZTEC or MEXICAS** of Chichimec origin, arrived at a small island in the center of the lake which covered what is now called the Valley of Mexico. There they founded their city which they called **Mexico-Tenochititlan** in 1325 AD. This site allowed them to coexist with a number of political and cultural centers which had already existed for some time on the shores of the lake, and to participate as mercenaries in the wars they were engaged in against each other. It was doubtless their valor and warlike spirit made it possible for the Aztecs to acquire the predominant position they occupied in the 15th and 16th centuries. They ruled over a great number of towns which, subjected to the Aztecs empire, were required to pay tribute in

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[7] Archeological Mexico, Marcia Castro Lea. Bonechi, 1995. P. 7.
[8] Teotihuacan, Susana Vogel. Bonechi, 1995. Pg. 5-6.
[9] Lonely Planet, 1995.

agricultural products, animals, gold and silver, cotton cloth, jade beads, uniforms and weapons for the warriors, and manpower for construction and the armies. It was all carefully organized through the use of books and registers and inspectors set to the most distant places. The streets of the Aztec capital, built on the lake, were canals and transportation was via canoe, which inspired some of the conquistadors to compare it to Venice. The principal religious and ceremonial buildings were situated in a sacred enclosure surrounded by a wall decorated with carved serpents, and containing pyramids such as the Great Temple, dedicated to the two gods: Tlaloc, god of rain, and Huitzilopochtli, god of war; and other temples consecrated to various gods, as well as civic-administrative buildings; the school for priests, the Palace of the Governor, the Pelota Court and the zoological gardens and many others."[10]

"The first thing the Aztecs did when they settled at Tenochtitlan in 1325 was to build a temple to their god. This established the 'center', the heart, the sacred area from which the four main divisions of the city would radiate. The boundaries of sacred ground and secular ground were marked. The object was to reproduce cosmic order, the vision the Aztecs had of the universe, with the Great Temple as its center. According to the Aztecs, the universe was composed of three levels: the upper or celestial level formed of thirteen heavens of which the highest, *Omeyocan,* was where *duality* live. The second was the terrestrial level, from which the four directions of the universe (the cardinal points) radiate. The third level, formed of the nine stages leading to Mictlan, was the underworld, the world of the dead. This concept of the universe is duplicated in the ceremonial center; the Great Temple is the sacred spot par excellence where these levels meet. At the same time, the four basic divisions of the city and the three levels of the Aztec universe all originate in the Great Temple. The *terrestrial level* is represented by the base on which the Temple stands; here are the braziers and the largest number of offerings. The *heavens* are symbolized by the bodies by which the building rises; the thirteenth heaven, *Omeyocan*, is in the space occupied by the two shrines, the place of duality. the idea of duality is present even in the oldest stages of construction and is represented by two bases on a platform, each with a shrine at the top."[11]

"The main tower of all was in the center and was taller than all; it was dedicated to Huitzilopochtli or Tlacauepan Cuexcotzin. This tower was divided at the top in such a fashion that it appeared to be two, having two chapels or altars at the top, each one covered by a spire, and at the tip, each one of these had its different insignias or divices. In one of them, the more important, was the statue of Huitzilopochtli, whom they also called Ilhuicatl Xoxouhqui; in the other was the image of the god Tlaloc. Before each of these was a round stone like a large chopping block that they called techat, where they slew those that were sacrificed in honor of that god; and from the stone to below there was a torrent of blood from those they slew on it, and so it was on all the other towers. These towers had their fronts towards the west, and they mounted all these towers by very narrow, steep steps from the bottom to the top."[12]

"In the mid-1400s , the Aztecs formed the Triple Alliance with two other valley states, *Texcoco* and *Tlacopan,* to wage war against *Tlaxcala* and *Huejotzingo,* outside the valley to the east. The prisoners they took formed the diet of sacrificed warriors that their god *Huizilopochtli* demanded to keep the sun rising every day. For the dedication of Tenochtitlan's Great Temple in 1487, the Aztec emperor *Ahuizotl* had 20,000 captives sacrificed. In the second half of the 15th century, the Triple Alliance, now

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[10] Archaeological Mexico. Marcia Castro Leal. Bonechi, Pg 9.
[11] Official Guide to the Great Temple. Pg. 20.
[12] Sahagun from Official Guide to the Great Temple, pg. 11.

led by Aztec emperors, brought most of central Mexico from the Gulf coast to the Pacific (though not Tlaxcala) under its control. The total population of the empire's 38 provinces may have been about five million. The empire's purpose was to exact tribute of resources absent from the heartland -- such as jade, turquoise, cotton, paper, tobacco, rubber, expendable humans for sacrificial purposes, lowland fruits and vegetables, cacao and precious feathers -- which were needed for the glorification of its elite and to support the many nonproductive servants of its war-oriented state. Like the Maya, the Aztecs believed they lived in a world whose predecessors had been destroyed by the death of the sun, wiping out humanity each time. Human sacrifices were designed to keep the sun alive."[13]

"In 1524, a scant three years after the conquest of Mexico, a group of Aztec scholars spoke with the first Franciscan missionaries to arrive in the newly founded capital of Mexico City. These were some of the words spoken by the Aztec in defense of their beliefs:

You said that we know not the Lord of the Close Vicinity, to Whom the heavens and earth belong. You said that our gods are not true gods. New words are these that you speak; because of them we are disturbed, because of them we are troubled. For our ancestors before us, who lived upon the earth, were unaccustomed to speak thus. From them we have inherited our pattern of life which in truth did they hold; in reverence they held, they honoured our gods.

This remarkable dialogue, recorded in the works of Fray Bernardino de Sahagun, marks an initial exchange between two worlds of religious thought that had developed entirely independently of one another for thousands of years."[14]

"The **MAYA** culture occupied the most extensive geographical area in Mesoamerica, overflowed the Mexican territory into parts of Central America; as a result there were marked regional differences which were manifested, in particular, in distinct artistic styles. The Mayas produced imposing structures, thanks to the fact that they used materials such as limestone. The stone made it possible to obtain a type of roof which endowed the buildings with a unique style and in addition facilitated the preservation throughout the centuries. The period in which the great Maya ceremonial centers and cities reached their zenith was between the years 300-1000 AD; architectural complexes, generally set up on large platforms, spread out over extensive areas. Some of the temples were so tall that they seemed to compete with the trees of the tropical forests that frequently surrounded them. At the same time other low horizontal structures contained dozens of apartments in which the priests and governors of these places lived. All were decorated with figures in stone or stucco that covered the walls and ceilings, and in some cases with wall paintings depicting religious or historical scenes, unmatched for their beauty in America. The steles were part of the architectural complexes, and their use was not limited to the Maya, even though they achieved a distinctive expression here, which served to record important historical, political or religious events. The Mayas had various calendars: the ritual calendar, or 260 days, and solar calendar of 360 days and fraction. But thanks to their knowledge of astronomy and mathematics, they also discovered the Venusian cycle of 584 days and established a register which counted the passage of time starting from an arbitrarily established date, like the year zero for western culture. Dates were annotated in a vigesimal system with numbers of distinct values. Bar-five; dot-one; shell-zero; placed in vertical columns, with a specific value according to the position occupied."[15]

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[13] Lonely Planet, 1995.
[14] Taube, Karl. Aztec and Maya Myths. British Museum Press, 1993. Pg. 31.
[15] Archaeological Mexical. Marcia Castro Leal, Bonechi. Pg. 13-14.

"The Maya had a very complex writing system, with 300 to 500 symbols, and they also refined the calendar possessed by other pre-Hispanic peoples into a tool for recording earthly and heavenly events. They could predict eclipses of the sun and the movements of the moon and Venus. Religion permeated every facet of Mayan life. The Maya believed in predestination and were fervent astrologers, but they also carried out elaborate rituals to win the gods' favors."[16]

"The cult of the god *QUETZALCOATL* (the plumed, or feathered, serpent) developed in Teotihuacan and continued among the Toltecs, Maya, and Aztecs. Micoatl, the first leader of the Toltec people, had a son who took the names of Quetzalcoatl, became leader of the Toltecs, and founded their new capital (present-day Tula) around AD999. According to one story he threw himself on to a funeral pyre on the beach and ascended to the skies to become the morning star and ruler of time. Another story say he set out to sea on a raft of snakes and vanished, while yet another related that he reached the Yucatan, where the cult of Quetzalcoatl (or Kukulcan) was introduced by the Maya culture. When Quetzalcoatl set sail, he vowed to return from the east and claim his land. The year prophesied for this coincided with the arrival of Cortes and his band in 1519."[17]

"Nowadays, the Mayan civilization is considered the most interesting of the pre-Columbian America. The major difference between the Mayans and other pre-Hispanic civilizations is the Mayan pacifist ideology, and their conviction to use weapons only in case of real need. For this reason, the Mayan life story is not made up of wars, expeditions and conquests, but of migration to fertile lands, founding of cities, offering monuments to their gods, and establishing pacts of alliance between cities."[18]

"On the eve of the Spanish conquest, many Mexican societies, including the Aztecs, were structurally similar. Each was politically centralized and divided into classes, with many people occupied in specialist tasks, including professional priests. Agriculture was productive despite the lack of draft animals, metal tools and the wheel. Maize tortillas and maize gruel were staple foods. Beans provided important protein, and a great variety of other crops were grown in different regions, from squashes, tomatoes and chilies to avocados, peanuts, papayas, and pineapples. Luxury foods for the elite included turkey, domesticated hairless dog, game and chocolate drinks.. Exchange of foods between different regions was an important reason for trade. All peoples worshipped a variety of powerful gods (often shared with other cultures), some of which demanded human sacrifices. War was widespread, often in connection with the need to take prisoners for sacrifice. Ancient Mexican civilization, nearly 3000 years old, was shattered in two short years from 1519 to 1521. A tiny group of Spanish invaders destroyed the Aztec empire, brought a new religion and reduced the native people to second-class citizens and slaves. So mutually alien were the newcomers and Indians that each doubted whether the other was human. The Pope gave the Indians the benefit of the doubt in 1537."[19]

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[16] Lonely Planet, 1995.
[17] Mexico. Thomas Cook. Passport Books. 1995. pg. 17.
[18] The Mayans. Universal Image Enterprise, 1993. Pg.7
[19] Lonely Planet, 1995.

COLONIAL MEXICO – THE OLD NEW WORLD

"In 1519 the Aztec Empire controlled the entire Valley of Mexico, and its influence extended even farther. Tenochititlan, the Aztec capital, was a city of some 300,000 inhabitants. So how could Hernan Cortes [on 21 April 1519], with 550 men and 16 horses, bring about the downfall of such an established power? A number of factors made this astonishing feat possible. Cortes, with perhaps unwitting perception, burnt his ships after landing, thus ensuring that the Spaniards would conquer or die. This suited his men, many of whom were determined to make their fortunes in the New World.

The Spaniards had no idea of the immense number of Indians they were challenging, not only Aztecs but uncounted hordes of other tribesmen. The Aztecs maintained their dominance through constant ruthless warfare with these other tribes, who resented their subjugation and demands for heavy tributes. The Spaniards fostered alliances with these tribes as they progresses towards the capital, and were greatly aided by two interpreters: *Geronimo de Agular*, a shipwrecked Spaniard captured by the Maya eight years earlier, and his mistress *La Malinche*, one of 20 maidens offered to Cortes in Tabasco, who was fluent in Maya and Nahuatl. [Note: In 1511, drifted by a terrible storm, a Spanish military group landed on the Yucatan coast. The shipwrecked survives were made prisoners immediately and sacrificed to the gods. Only two survived, one of which was found by Hernan Cortes in 1519, while the other married the Mayan governor's daughter. At the arrival of the Spanish troops he declared himself being absolutely against his fellow countrymen.]

Cortes was helped, too, by the superstitious awe with which the Indians regarded both the Europeans and their horses. This gave the Spaniards, bolstered by modest reinforcements, time to establish a relatively secure toe-hold on the Aztec capital -- in spite of the fact that half of them were disabled with diarrhea -- and imprison the Emperor Moctezuma, who anxiously interpreted various prophesies and portents in the light of this invasion.

Battles and skirmishes continued, however, and during one of these Moctezuma was killed. His death, on top of the unendurable edict prohibiting human sacrifice, roused the Aztecs to such an extent that Cortes retreated from Tenochititlan. About a year later, after numerous reinforcements and more battles with various tribes, Cortes returned to the capital in 1521 to defeat the Aztecs once and for all. He razed the temples and used the stones to build churches and homes in a new city he called Mexico. The task of settling the whole country met with bitter resistance in some areas, but was completed by about 1600. [The position of the conquered peoples deteriorated disastrously, not only because of harsh treatment at the hands of the colonists but also because of a series of epidemics, caused by diseases brought by the Spaniards. The Indian population feel from an estimated 25 million at the time of conquest to a little over one million by 1605."]

The Conquistadors' official purpose in conquering the land they called New Spain was to convert the natives to Christianity, but individually they aimed for a new life of wealth. Discovering silver, gold, and other minerals, the Spaniards opened lucrative mines. They also developed agriculture along European lines and formed large feudal estates. In both cases local Indians provided cheap labor. [Despite the fact that Indians were legally recognized as "human beings" and were protected by law, Indians were regulary abused, mistreated, and held virtually as slaves.]

The religious conquest by the missionaries, however, was as significant as the Spaniards' military triumph. Franciscans, Jesuits, Dominicans, and Augustinians dealt with the natives directly learned their languages, earned their trust, converted the majority, and so paved the way for the fusion of the two cultures. [In the Spanish colonial system, it was considered the responsibility of the colonial power to "civilize" the Indians by converting them to Catholicism. This meant outlawing cultural and religious practices of the indigenous people and often destroying traditional ways of life.]

Thus began 300 years of relentless colonization and rule by Spain. Virtually every major city in present-day Mexico was surveyed and planned during the 16th century, following a pattern that continues to this day. Cities in New Spain centered on a plaza around which were located the church, government buildings, and business and professional premises; eventually these plazas acquired trees, fountains, and almost always and bandstand, to become the town's focus of social activities.

Over time, the society was divided into four ethnic categories: the *peninsulares* or *gachupines* (Spaniards born in Spain); *criollos* (of Spanish blood but born in Mexico); *mestizos* (mixed Spanish and Indian, by far the largest ethnic group today); and the *indigenous* (Indians)."[20]

In 1765, Charles III, King of Spain began a series of blunders that were to mirror those its colonial rival England committed with its own territory in the future United States. Charles instituted widespread new taxes and other burdens on New Spain. He also cracked down on the Catholic church, which he saw as a rival for power and wealth. A series of repressive actions by the militia further angered the populace."[21]

NOTE: "Identity is the spirit of the person. Dominating that spirit affects a person's entire sense of being. Colonization, regardless of the approach or process, greatly affects the human spirit and mind. The process of colonization therefore has meant not only control of the land and resources of the conquered people, but control of the minds and cultures of the colonized people as well.

Colonization also produces a sense of superiority and inferiority. In order to colonize the Americas successfully, the colonizers maintained certain belief systems which supported that process. The Europeans believed their culture, their society, their religion, and their way of life, was superior to that of the people they eventually were able to dominate. An example of the regard for Indians is reflected in an 1881 report on United States Indian Policy:

To domesticate and civilize wild Indians is a noble work, the accomplishment of which should be a crown of glory to any nation. But to allow them to drag along year after year, generation after generation, in their old superstitions, laziness, and filth, when we have the power to elevate them in the scale of humanity, would be a lasting disgrace of our government...If the Indians are to be civilized...they must learn our language and adopt our modes of life.
(Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1881, edited by Francis Paul Prucha, *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, p. 156). [22]

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[20] Mexico, Thomas Cook. Passport Books, 1995. pgs.14-15
[21] World Facts and Maps - Rand McNally, 1996 Edition. Pg. 65
[22] Ruiz, Octavio Madigan. Many Faces of Mexico, Resource Center of the Americas, pg. 94

WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE

"New Spain was the richest colony held by any European country during the 17th and 18th centuries. Spain needed New Spain's wealth because it had huge expenses trying to maintain its powerful position in Europe. To manage the resource-rich colony, the Spanish exerted strong social, political and economic control over New Spain. But as Spain increased its demands, more and more people began demanding independence from Spain...

The year is 1810. Since 1808, there as been a drought with no rain day after dry day. Food is scarce and prices are high. Discontent is widespread among many people in New Spain, but especially among the *Criollos*. In the central part of the country, *Criollos* have been planning a rebellion against the Spanish Crown and the Spanish people who run New Spain. The *Criollos* want to run the government themselves. They know they do not have the fighting power to defeat the Spanish Crown, but with the help of the *mestizos* and the Indians, they think they can win. But how are they to appeal to these people to convince them to join the revolt?

Father Miguel Hidalgo is a *criollo* priest in a small village of Dolores, near Guanajuato. His parish is composed of poor people, namely Indians and *mestizos*. Hidalgo is sympathetic to their plight and he blames their unjust treatment on the Spanish people and the Crown. Hidalgo is also realistic; he wants to be part of the *Criollo* crusade and perhaps he will gain something, too.

On the night of 15 September 1810, the bell begins to toll in the Dolores church. Father Hidalgo calls together his parishioners. He begins:

I have been your priest and your protector for seven long years. Together we have made a community of which we all have a right to be proud. Together we planted mulberry trees and grapevines, raised silkworms, and made wine, in spite of the Spaniards' opposition. Together we put up our factory where pottery and leather goods are produces. Always, as you well know, I have been your friend. Always I have zealously defended the poor and the oppressed. When the Spaniards come and uprooted our trees, because of the competition, I protested with all my might, but it was in vain. Finally the time has come for us to unite and rise up against our oppressors, both yours and mine. So now in the name of our beautiful land, and in the name of our beloved Virgin of Guadalupe, let us take back the lands that were stolen from Mexico three centuries ago.
Viva la Virgen de Guadalupe! Viva Mexico! Long live the Virgin of Guadalupe! Long live Mexico!

Then with the banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Hidalgo and his parishioners begin to march toward Guanajuato. After a few hours, tens of thousands join the dissident crowd. They often are unruly, looting, raping and killing those who do not join. By the time they reach Guanajuato, there are 100,000 furious sympathizers who destroy the city in a few hours. Five hundred Spaniards die at Guanajuato, along with nearly two thousand of Hidalgo's allies. Eventually Hidalgo is captured, imprisoned and killed by a firing squad in 1811. His head is put on a pole in a public place in Guanajuato to remind others about the penalty for treason. Hidalgo, the martyr, incited a rebellion that lasted until the year 1821.[23]

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[23] Ruiz, Octavio Madigan. Many Faces of Mexico. Resource Center of the Americas, pg. 128-129.

"Gradually, rebel forces from the various provinces united, and on September 27, 1821, Mexico achieved independence through the Treaty of Cordoba. One of the first moves of the new provisional government was to name a new Emperor of Mexico. This went over poorly with the other revolutionaries and in 1823 Augustin I resigned and was replaced by a republic. A series of governments followed, where rule of succession was by violent coup, rather than by election." [24]

"The newly liberated colony paid dearly for independence. Thousands of people died, many of them Indians who had fought with the dream of becoming free again. Power simply changed hands from the Spanish elite to the *Criollo* elite. The destiny of the majority, the Indians, was still in the hands of a privileged minority. The 'freedoms' gained by the war most benefited *criollos* and *mestizos*. Most of the Spanish living in Mexico returned to their place of birth.

After the war, Mexico opened its borders so free trade could take place. Merchants from the US and European countries scrambled to invest in businesses and trade with the Mexicans. Open borders also meant that people from countries other than Spain began to move to Mexico.

After 1821, Mexico was no longer a colony, but the social, economic, and political systems that had existed under Spain were not reformed. Poverty and illness continued to be widespread, especially among Indians and Africans. The ideals of Hidalgo were cast aside. For many, the only thing that changed were the names and faces of the leaders. The social, political and economic systems that had been in place for 300 years remained essentially the same for the majority of the people. However, Mexico now was an independent republic and by 1824, Mexico had its own constitution.

The war campaigns produced a number of military heroes, and soon the military was the only group capable of maintaining order. The new leadership and the political parties were weak and inexperienced. They continued to follow the Spanish mode of undemocratic, authoritarian rule. Consequently, the ground was fertile for dictatorships, political corruption and violence."[25]

"Twenty two years of chronic instability followed independence: the presidency changed hands 36 times and large chunks of Mexican territory were lost to the USA. In 1845, the US congress voted to annex Texas. This led to the Mexican-American War, in which US troops captured Mexico City. At the end of the war, under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), Mexico ceded modern Texas, California, Utah, Colorado, and most of New Mexico and Arizona to the USA. By 1862, Mexico was heavily in debt to Britain, France and Spain, who sent a joint force to Mexico to collect their debts. France, under the hawkish Napoleon III, decided to go even further and colonize Mexico, leading to yet another war. In 1864, Napoleon invited the Austrian archduke, Maximilian of Hapsburg, to become emperor of Mexico but his reign was brief."[26]

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[24] World Facts and Maps - Rand McNally, 1996 Edition Pg. 65

[25] Ruiz, Octavio Madigan. Many Faces of Mexico Resrouce Center of the Americas, pg. 130.

[26] Internet: Destination Mexico

THE REVOLUTION OF 1910

"Things were relatively stable under the dictatorships of Porfirio Diaz, who ruled for 33 years until 1911. With the slogan 'order and progress', he brought Mexico into the industrial age and kept it free of the wars which had plagued it for over 60 years, but peace came at a cost. Political opposition, free elections and a free press were banned, and control was maintained by a ruthless army. Widespread dissatisfaction with Diaz's rule led to strikes which precipitated the Mexican Revolution."[27]

"Meanwhile, relations with the United States soured over the question of Texas. A move by the U.S. Congress in 1845 to annex the then-independent state of Texas touched off a war that ended in 1848 with Mexico losing California and the neighboring southwest. In 1855, a group of Mexican intellectuals that included Benito Juarez staged a coup. It was the Mexican equivalent of the French Revolution, and it brought about reform laws designed to guarantee civil liberties and curtail the power of the church. Instead, the reforms prompted a civil war that ended when France invaded the country seeking repayment of debts. French rule lasted until 1867, when Emperor Maximillian was executed. Elections were called, and Juarez took office as president. More political uncertainty followed until Jose de la Cruz Porfirio Diaz took control in 1876. Except for a four-year respite, he remained in power until 1911.

During this time, Mexico's land-holders increased their wealth and a new middle class was born. But much of this prosperity came at the expense of the Indians, who were often brutally repressed. In 1910, a liberal revolution began with widespread support. One of the most famous rebels was Emiliano Zapata, who had a peasant background and who championed the cause of poor people whose land had been stolen by the wealthy."[28]

In a conversation with then-President Madero, Zapata said:

"What interests us is that, right away, lands be returned to the pueblos, and the promises which the revolution made be carried out."

Madero responded by saying that the land problem was a delicate and complicated issue which must follow the proper procedures. He reminded Zapata that they were in a new era, and urged Zapata to disband his army.

Zapata stood up and walked over to where Madero sat. He pointed at the gold watch chain Madero had on his vest. "Look, Senor Madero," he said, "if I take advantage of the fact that I'm armed and take away your watch and keep it, and after a while we meet, both of us armed the same, would you have a right to demand that I give it back?"

"Certainly," Madero told him.

"Well," Zapata concluded, "that's exactly what has happened to us in Morelos, where a few planters have taken over by force the villages' lands. My soldiers -- the armed farmers and all the people in the villages -- demand that I tell you, with full respect, that they want the restitution of their lands to be got underway right now...I'll disband my boys as soon as the land is divided. What are you going to do?"[29]

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[27] Internet. Destination Mexico

[28] World Facts and Maps - Rand McNally, 1996 Edition. Pg. 65.

[29] Ruiz, Octavio Madigan. Many Faces of Mexico, pg. 169

"The revolution was not a clear-cut struggle between oppression and liberty, but a 10-year period of shifting allegiances between a spectrum of leaders, in which successive attempts to create stable governments and peace were wreaked by new outbreaks of fighting. The basic ideological rift which dogged the revolutionaries was between liberal reformers and more radical leaders, such as Emiliano Zapata, who were fighting for the transfer of hacienda land to the peasants. The 10 years of violent civil war cost an estimated one and a half to two million lives -- roughly one in eight Mexicans. After the revolution, political will was focused on developing or rebuilding the national infrastructure, such as rural schools, roads, hydroelectric stations and irrigation pipelines. The Party of the Institutionalized Revolution (PRI) took power of 1934 (and still rules today), introducing a program of reform and land redistribution. [Despite years of chaos as rival factions vied for power, a constitution was passed in 1917 that -- although heavily modified -- is the basis for the modern Mexico.]

Paulino Martinez wrote the following article regarding the revolution in a San Antonio, Texas newspaper:

"Public liberty has disappeared in my Country, particularly the right to write and publish articles on politics in the independent press....Newspapermen of courage are condemned to death in Mexico. Sometimes that sentence is executed by common assassins...or by torture in prison....
For the third time I have been forced to seek refuge in this country (the USA), searching for liberties denied me by the Despotic Government of General Diaz at home...The only crime I had committed against the Tyrannical Executioners of the Press was 'telling the truth; fighting evil.' I could not stand impassionately by and see the wrongs of ABSOLUTISM destroying my native country. I am firmly convinced the a Despotic Government can never produce real progress and happiness in a Nation. That is why I fight the system of Government established by Brute Force by General Diaz some 33 years ago. We all know that it was a coup that elevated him to power, and that this power has been maintained by deceit and violence....
An honorable press should aid the people in this fight. The Government of the General Diaz has stopped me from doing my duty as a citizen in my own Country. It has denied me access to my own press office... It is for this reason that I now write on foreign soil, and because JUSTICE should be everywhere served, and the truth everyplace told."[30]

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[30] Martinez, Paulino. *Monitor Democratico*, San Antonio, Texas. February 5, 1910 (found in Many Faces of Mexico, pg. 167.

CONTEMPORARY MEXICO

In reality, our poor Revolution had long since been the victim of two-fold takeover: it had been co-opted politically by the official government Party, a bureaucracy that is similar in more than one respect to the Communist bureaucracies of Eatern Europe, and it had been co-opted economically and socially by a financial oligarchy that had intimate ties to huge American corporations.
-Octavio Paz, 1968

By the mid 1960s many Mexicans, especially students, believed that economic 'progress' was at the expense of their freedom as guaranteed in the 1917 Constitution. When many university students studied economics and political science and then observed the reality around them, they recognized contradictions between the ideals of the Mexican Revolution and the reality of Mexico in 1968.

The place was Tlatelolco, a large plaze in Mexico City. The date was October 2, 1968. An estimated 4,000 - 10,000 people gathered in Mexico city at Tlatelolco to listen to student speakers demand that the government listen to their grievances.

The helicopter hovered overhead just above the treetops. Finally, at the appointed hour, 4:00 pm, the march began in absolute silence... As soon as we left Chapultepec Park...hundreds of people began to join our ranks. All along the Paseo de la Reforma, the sidewalks, the median strips, the monuments, and even the trees were full of people, and every hundred yards our ranks doubled. And the only sound from those tens of thousands and then hundreds of thousands of people were their footfalls....The silence was more impressive than the huge crowd. It seemed as though we were trampling all the politicians' torrents or words undertoot, all their speeches that are always the same. "You can see that we're not vandals or rebels without a cause -- the label that's constantly been pinned on us. Our silence proves it."

At approximately 7:00 pm riot police moved into the crowd, swinging clubs and chains aginst protesters and spectators. People in the crowd tried to defend themselves, using rocks and bare fists. Snipers in a nearby building responded, supposedly to protect the crods. Within minutes the army entered the area with armoued vehicles and automatic weapons. Three hundred tanks, assault troops, jeeps and troop transports surrounded the entire area. Thousands of Mexicans were caught in crossfire. Anyone who moved was fired upon. The terror lasted until 4:00 am, when the army crushed the demonstration and gained control. By then, at least 500 students and spectators were killed and at least 1,000 were seriously wounded. Two thousand people were jailed. The incident took place on the same spot on which the Aztecs made their last stand of major resistance against the Spaniards under Cortes in 1521, which was the orginal *Noche Triste*. It is also the site of ancient Aztec human sacrifice rituals. A week later, the 1968 Olympic Games began in Mexico City as though othing had happened."[31]

"The 1968 student movement really shook Mexican society to its foundations, and that's why the government began to be so afraid of it."
(Felix Lucio Hernandez Gamundi)

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[31] Many Faces of Mexico, pg. 233-235.

"The oil boom of the late 1970s increased Mexico's oil revenues and financed industrial and agricultural investments, but the oil glut in the mid 1980s sent petroleum prices plunging and led to Mexico's worst recession for decades. Not surprisingly, the economic downturn led to an increase in organized political dissent on both the left and the right. Economic problems were not helped by the earthquake of 19 September 1985, which registered eight on the Richter scale, and caused more than US$4 billion in damage. Hundreds of buildings in Mexico City were destroyed, thousands of people were made homeless and at least 8000 people were killed.

Carlos Salinas de Gortari became president in 1988 after controversial elections in which it is widely believed he did not win the majority of votes. However, he gained popular support by appearing to have successfully renegotiated Mexico's crippling national debt and to have brought rising inflation under control. A sweeping privatization program and a burgeoning international finance market led to Mexico being heralded in the international press as an exemplar of free-market economics. The apex of Salinas' economic reform was NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, which came into effect on 1 January 1994. Fears that NAFTA would increase poverty amongst the Indian peasants led to an uprising in the southern state of Chiapas by the Zapatistas. The day NAFTA took effect, a group of 2000 peasants shocked Mexico by taking over San Cristobal de Las Casas and other regional towns, and demanding improved social justice for Mexico's oppressed Indians. The uprising precipitated a social upheaval in Chaipas, with peasants forcibly taking over hundreds of estates, farms and ranches. The rebels' leader, a balaclava-clad figure known only as Subcomandante Marcos, became a national folk hero.

"The flames that consumed the town hall in San Cristobal on January 1, 1994 were not sparked overnight. They were fueled by generations of Indians angry over perceived economic and political discrimination by Mexico's government. In the days that followed, as many as 2,000 guerrillas occupied six other towns in Mexico's southernmost state of Chiapas. They destroyed government offices, took wealthy landowners, police and politicians hostage, and found a worldwide audience for their grievances. When the Mexican army fought back, the rebels returned to their mountain hideouts, waging running battles with soldiers backed by airplanes. At least 11, 1994 were not sparked overnight. They were fueled by generations of Indians angry over perceived economic and political discrimination by Mexico's government. In the days that followed, as many as 2,000 guerrillas occupied six other towns in Mexico's southernmost state of Chiapas. They destroyed government offices, took wealthy landowners, police and politicians hostage, and found a worldwide audience for their grievances. When the Mexican army fought back, the rebels returned to their mountain hideouts, waging running battles with soldiers backed by airplanes. At least 140 people, and perhaps many more, died. There were widespread charges that the army had executed rebels in its custody and that it fired indiscriminately into groups of peaceful civilians.

The rebellion also tarnished the efforts of President Carlos Salinas de Gotari to portray Mexico as a nation on the verge of moving into the ranks of other industrialized nations. The rebels, calling themselves the Zapatista National Liberation Army, after Emiliano Zapata, a legendary hero of the 1910 revolution, claimed NAFTA would eliminate their culture and lead to economic ruin. They charged that the wealthy farmers in Chiapas, who have resisted the land reforms implemented elsewhere in Mexico, would benefit from free trade of their high-value crops to the U.S. Meanwhile, the Zapatistas claimed, small farmers would lose government subsidies for staple crops like corn. Forced off their land by the

resulting poverty, the farmers would end up living in vast shantytowns around already population-choked cities like Mexico City.

...Until Mexico can satisfy the demands of its poor there will be continuing political and economic instability. The rebels continue to wage a low-level war against the government, and this ongoing conflict was cited as one of the causes of a serious economic crises in January 1995...Negotiations have been fruitless."[32]

In March 1994, Luis Donald Colosio, Salinas' chosen successor, was assassinated. His replacement, 43-year-old Ernesto Zedillo, won the election but with only 49% of the vote. With confidence in Mexico's political system and its adolescent economy at a perilous low, the current economic crisis kicked in. Within weeks of Zedillo's swearing-in ceremony, there was a dramatic slump in the peso and prices in Mexico began to rise, leaving Mexico almost bankrupt and dependent on an emergency US$50 billion credit package from US and international financial bodies. Mexico had to put up its oil earnings -- a key symbol of national self-reliance -- as collateral for this aid. Despite this, Zedillo appears genuinely interested in democracy, presiding over a period in which opposition parities are finally being allowed to win provincial elections, and a culture of electoral scrutineering is developing. The Zapatistas also operate within a democratic framework, choosing their internal hierarchy through free election. These ideological flourishes are periodically undermined by guerrilla-style activity, both by the rebels and by Mexico's militant police force. There is no doubt that reform, both economic and political, is on Mexico's agenda. It is Zedillo's difficult task to relinquish the PRI's iron grip on power without letting a Mexico unused to political freedom degenerate into chaos."[33]

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[32] World Facts and Maps - Rand McNally, 1996 Edition. Pg. 64.
[33] Internet: Destination Mexico

GOVERNMENT

"In structure, the United States of Mexico is a republic that was modeled after the United States of America. Each of its thirty-one states elects its own governor, legislature and four senators. Like the US, the Mexican federal government consists of a president, congress and supreme court.

The president is elected to a six-year term by a simple majority and is prohibited from seeking re-election. The president appoints members of the cabinet, ambassadors, generals and admirals, subject to ratification by the senate. As in the US, the president is commander-in-chief of the armed forces. There is no vice-president, which makes unforeseen successions complicated.

Congress consists of two chambers: a 128-seat Senate and a 500-seat Chamber of Deputies. The Mexican congress has virtually the same powers as the US congress. However, the congress has never seriously challenged any proposals or budgets presented by the president. That is mainly because the majority of members are from the same political party as the president.

Like the US, Mexico has a constitution. Adopted in 1917, the Mexican Constitution reflects the goals of the Mexican revolution to provide a better life for all Mexican people. It outlines the authority of the government by defining the role of the president and congress; it also limits the powers of the church and religious organizations. The Constitution of 1917 declares that primary education should be free and compulsory. Article 27 called for land reform, including a decree to re-establish an ejido system of communal land holdings. It also states that land must serve a 'useful social function' and 'only Mexicans by birth or naturalization have the right to acquire ownership of lands.' Article 123 provides for an eight-hour workday, a six-day workweek, a minimum wage, and equal pay for equal work regardless of sex or nationality. This article also gives labor the right to organize, bargain collectively and go on strike.

The Mexican congress is able to make amendments to the constitution. In 1983, in one day, the congress amended Article 27 to read that responsibility for land reform lay with state governors. Within a few years, hundreds of thousands of parcels of ejido land had changed hands for foreigners to grow food for export."[34]

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[34] Ruiz, Octavio Madigan. Many Faces of Mexico. pg. 225.

CULTURE OF MEXICO

"We know there is pain in our lives and that death is not very far away." "The picador must stand very still. The bull must come to him as a sign of the bull's bravery." (From a movie - title unknown regarding the billfights of Mexico).

"Mexicans have had a talent for art -- and a love of bright colors -- since pre-Hispanic times. Today, Mexico is covered with murals and littered with galleries of contemporary and historic art, which are a highlight of the country. Mexican creativity is also expressed through the country's vibrant folk-art tradition. Pre-Hispanic art consists mainly of stone carvings, frescoes and murals, and ceramics. The arts were regarded as an important part of the national revival after the revolution, and Mexico's top artists, such as Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros and Jose Clemente Orozco, were commissioned to decorate important public buildings with large, vivid murals on social and historical themes. Frida Kahlo, who married Rivera, painted anguished self-portraits and grotesque, surreal images which became hugely popular in the 1980s, decades after her death. Renowned Mexican writers include Carlos Fuentes, Jorge Ibarguengoitia and the 1990 Nobel Prize-winner Octavio Paz. In Mexico, Juan Rulfo is generally regarded as the country's supreme novelist. His novel *Pedro Paramo* has been described as *'Wuthering Heights* set in Mexico and written by Kafka'.

Although Mexican governments since the revolution have been unsupportive of religion, more than 90% of the population professes to believe in Catholicism. While most of the indigenous people are Christian, their Christianity is usually fused with more ancient beliefs. Whole hierarchies of 'pagan' gods sometimes coexist with the Christian Trinity and saints. Since 1531, the most binding symbol of the Church has been the dark-skinned Virgin of Guadalupe, who is regarded as a link between Catholic and non-Catholic Indian worlds.

Mexican cuisine is centered around three national staples: tortillas, fried beans and chili peppers. Tortillas are thin round patties of pressed corn or wheat-flour dough cooked on griddles. Bean *(frijoles)* are eaten boiled, fried or refried in soups, on tortillas, or with just about anything. Apart form an astonishing array of freshly squeezed fruit juices *(jugos)*, which are readily available from street stalls, Mexico is also famous for its alcoholic beverages -- mexcal and tequila in particular.

Mexico's frequent fiestas are full-blooded, highly colorful affairs which often go on for several days and add a great deal of spice to life. There's a major national holiday or celebration almost every month, to which each town adds almost as many local saints' days and fairs. **Carnaval**, held late February or early March, the week or so before Ash Wednesday, is the big bash before the 40-day penance of Lent. **Dia de los Muertos** is held on 2 November (when the souls of the dead are believed to return to earth), and is perhaps Mexico's most characteristic fiesta. Families build altars in their homes and visit graveyards with garlands and gifts to commune with their dead ancestors. Sweets resembling human skeletons are sold in almost every market."[35]

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[35] Internet: Destination Mexico

CONCLUSION:

I came to Mexico not knowing what I would find. The warnings were many -- do not eat this or drink that -- and apprehension and yet excitement flooded my heart and soul. I've tried to capture in my mind and with my pen and camera some images of Mexico which I hope to always remember:

-- The awesomeness of Barranca de Cobre
-- The children and families begging and selling in the streets.
-- The bright colors of clothing
-- The lines and complexity of border crossings.
-- The pride expressed in the fine handiwork.
-- The officers checking for drugs
-- The passion of your music and dances
-- The vast variety of landscapes
-- The very young "merchants"
-- The monuments and fountains
-- The garbage left at the side of the road
-- The mothers blowing bubbles for their children
-- The beautiful plazas - a gathering place for communities
-- The unbelievable skills of the ancient cultures
-- The kindness of the Mexican people

These are but a sprinkling of the images that I've been trying to permanently capture. Among all of the information and experiences that I received while in Mexico through the generosity of the Fulbright-Hays Mexico/U.S.Commission, the most powerful is the resolving of misunderstandings.

As a teacher I hope to not only help my students understand and appreciate the country and people of Mexico, but to increase their willingness and ability to see beyond the artificial and negative boundaries of our cultures -- and begin to work not just in our own communities, but in our worldwide community where there are more similarities than differences.

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A PAST STILL PRESENT - ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS OF MEXICO

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GRADE LEVEL/SUBJECT: 7-12 Social Studies

OVERVIEW:

"Although 1492 marked the initial contact between New World peoples and Renaissance Europe, it was not until the early sixteenth century that Spanish explorers first encountered major native civilizations in southern Mexico and neighboring Central America. The peoples of this region inhabited great cities with complex forms of administration and government, employed intricate systems of writing and calendrics, and celebrated refined poetry, music, dance and art. Unfortunately, it was not sophisticated culture but the promise of gold and riches which drew the first Europeans. In 1521 the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan was conquered and looted, and only a minute fraction of its treasures were preserved or recorded for posterity. While in Brussels in 1520, the German artist Albecht Durer examined Aztec material previously sent by Hernan Cortes to King Charles V: 'All the days of my life I have seen nothing that rejoiced my heart so much as these things, for I have seen among them beautiful works of art, and I marveled at the subtle intellects of men in foreign places.' Although little understood by Durer, these same works of art portrayed complex modes of thought no less refined than the objects themselves. It is easy to lament the massive destruction of screenfold books, sculpture and other native works at the time of Spanish conquest, but a far more profound cultural loss was the destruction of indigenous customs and beliefs by death and disease, slavery and mass conversion."[1]

OBJECTIVES:

Eurocentric thinking leads many to believe that life on this continent began only when the Europeans arrived. The purpose, therefore, of this unit it to help the students understand and appreciate the "beautiful works of art...[and] subtle intellects of" the early civilizations of Mesoamerica. At the completion of this unit, the students will:

1. Identify the locations of the early cultures of Mesoamerica.
2. Compare and contrast the cultures of Mesoamerica.
3. Analyze the contributions of the Mesoamerica cultures.

QUESTIONS:

1. What contributions have the ancient civilizations of Mexico made to our culture today?
2. Who were the Aztec, Mayas, Olmecs and other cultures of Mesoamerica?
3. How did their religious beliefs influence their culture?
4. What happened to these ancient civilizations?

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[1] Taube, Karl. Aztec and Maya Myths. British Museum Press, 1995.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Overheads
2. Make overhead of Aztec Codices
3. Copy blank map of Mexico and Central America

TEACHING TECHNIQUES

1. Overheads
   - Map of Mesoamerica
   - Timeline
   - Sculptures of Aztec, Olmec, and Maya
   - Teotihuacan
   - Aztec calendar
   - People of Mesoamerica

   Discuss and have the students take notes on the various overheads.
2. Art Project - clay figurines

   This can be done as a classroom project, homework assignment, or extra credit.
3. Cooperative Learning - compare and contrast Aztec and Maya - make posters showing elements of culture for each group.
4. Map: Have students locate Mesoamerican cultures on their own map using the overhead map.
5. Video: Early Civilizations of Mexico or another that is appropriate.
6. Worksheet: attached
7. Aztec Codices (Idea borrowed from Many Faces of Mexico

   Have students first try to deciper the codices, and then discuss their meaning after sharing ideas.

BACKGROUND NOTES:

"Mexico is a country "with a rich and glorious past. When Rome was falling, when Paris was still just an island in the Seine, Mexico's civilization was already flourishing. Here, the original people of Mexico already had advanced knowledge of science, mathematics, astronomy and medicine. They had well-established social and legal systems. And they lived in urban centers that would make today's city planners jealous."[2]

To understand Mexico's history, you need to remember that the ancient past is still important in modern Mexico. As the writer William Faulkner put it, 'The past is not dead. It's not even past.' Before the Spanish explorers came to this land of Mexico in 1519 there were an estimated 10 million Indian inhabitants who had been living under an organized social structure for over 3,000 years. The Spanish realized they couldn't sweep this civilization aside so they built their Colonial empire upon the existing culture. "Which is why Mexico's past wasn't erased. Instead, the Indian culture merged with Spain's. The result is that there are over 20

[2] Turismo de Mexico, 1994

million Native Mexicans here speaking nearly 60 languages and dialects. And they are all descendants of those ancient citizens."[3]

According to archeologists, the first people are believed to arrived in America from Asia across the Bering Strait as early as 50,000 BC. The descendants of these earliest people built highly developed civilizations which flourished from 1200 BC to 1521 AD.

"Some 3000 years ago, at the southern edge of the Gulf of Mexico, the **OLMECS** emerged as the first great civilization in Mesoamerica. This mother culture flourished until around 400 BC, and its achievements influenced other civilizations (notably those of Monte Alban, the Maya, and the Aztecs). Their class system, with power and knowledge concentrated in a single group, was the prototype for later societies."[4]

About 2000 BC the first villages were established and crops such as beans, corn and squash were cultivated. Archaeological excavations have discovered objects in clay: female figurines related to fertility cults, pottery and tools in stone and bone. Many of these were found in the floor of huts as offerings to the dead. "Significant changes took place between the years 1000 and 100 BC, when commerce with far-off regions began, resulting in the diffusion of new elements and enriching the local cultures. Religious concepts became more complex, expressed in ceremonial architecture, the representations of the first gods, rites such as the game of pelota, and progressing astronomical knowledge, which led to a calendar whose scope was agricultural and ritual, and the invention of writing to record it."[5]

The Classical Period (100 BC to 900 AD) is considered the height of the early civilizations and witnessed the development of a highly advanced culture. Great religious centers and cities arose, "covering wide areas with orderly constructions furnished with patios and plazas, oriented along predetermine axes based on the cardinal points, evidence of a long tradition in the study of the stars. The finest example of this period is **Teotihuacan,** the "City of the Gods", so called for its legends and size -- as shown by the fact that it extended over all of 40 square km. A city like Teotithuacan is the result of a society that is highly evolved in its social, as well as political, and religious organizations, with an economy that was sound enough to support priests, builders, painters, sculptors, potters, etc. The governing class at its head probably consisted of priest-kings who monopolized the use of the large constructions and art in general and controlled the manufacture and commercialization of the products as well as knowledge of the stars, writing, the use of the calendar and the rites and ceremonies dedicated to the gods."[6]

"Teotihuacan had systems for utilizing underground water and collecting rain, drains, artisans' workshops, dwelling complexes, markets, streets, temples, palaces, a large ceremonial center and districts where members of other Mesoamerican groups lived who had moved into the city. It was possible to build the large structures thanks to the numerous work force available

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[3] Turismo de Mexico, 1994

[4] Mexico. Thomas Cook. Passport Press, 1995. pg. 16.

[5] Archaeological Mexico, Marcia Castro Leal. Bonechi, 1995. Pg. 6.

[6] Archeological Mexico, Marcia Castro Lea. Bonechi, 1995. P. 7.

and the priestly class. The latter, in addition to performing ceremonies and rites organized work and were in control of politics, administration and the economy. This was the social stratification and the division of productive labor....

"Religion occupied a position of prime importance, and the gods worshipped were associated with water, the earth and fertility. They included *Tlaloc*, the god of Rain, *Chalchiutlicue*, the goddess of Water, and *Quetzalcoatl*, the Feathered Serpent. The gods show the basic religious preoccupation's of the Teotihuacanos and were represented in sculptures, clay figurines and mural paintings."[7]

"Teotihuacan was a true city in that many classes of people lived and worked there. Its people were literate, and used the bar-and-dot number system and the 260-day sacred year. Teotihuacan became an imperialistic state after 400 AD. At its peak it may have controlled the southern two-thirds of Mexico, all of Guatemala and Belize and bits of Honduras and El Salvador. But it was an empire geared to tribute-gathering in order to feed the mouths and tastes of Teotihuacan's big population, rather than a full-scale occupation. In the 7th-century, the heart of Teotihuacan was put to the torch and the city was plundered and largely abandoned. It is likely that the state had already been economically weakened -- perhaps by the rise of rival powers in central Mexico, by a drying-up of the climate or by desiccation caused by the denuding of the surrounding hillsides for wood. Teotihuacan's influence on Mexico's later cultures was huge. Many of its gods, such as the feathered serpent Quetzalcoatl, an all-important symbol of fertility, and Tlaloc, the rain god, were still being worshipped by the Aztecs a millennium later."[8]

"After lengthy migrations from the north of Mesoamerica, the **AZTEC or MEXICAS** of Chichimec origin, arrived at a small island in the center of the lake which covered what is now called the Valley of Mexico. There they founded their city which they called **Mexico-Tenochititlan** in 1325 AD. This site allowed them to coexist with a number of political and cultural centers which had already existed for some time on the shores of the lake, and to participate as mercenaries in the wars they were engaged in against each other. It was doubtless their valor and warlike spirit made it possible for the Aztecs to acquire the predominant position they occupied in the 15th and 16th centuries. They ruled over a great number of towns which, subjected to the Aztecs empire, were required to pay tribute in agricultural products, animals, gold and silver, cotton cloth, jade beads, uniforms and weapons for the warriors, and manpower for construction and the armies. It was all carefully organized through the use of books and registers and inspectors set to the most distant places. The streets of the Aztec capital, built on the lake, were canals and transportation was via canoe, which inspired some of the conquistadors to compare it to Venice. The principal religious and ceremonial buildings were situated in a sacred enclosure surrounded by a wall decorated with carved serpents, and containing pyramids such as the Great Temple, dedicated to the two gods: Tlaloc, god of rain, and Huitzilopochtli, god of war; and other temples consecrated to various gods, as well as civic-administrative

[7] Teotihuacan, Susana Vogel Bonechi, 1995 Pg 5-6
[8] Lonely Planet, 1995

buildings; the school for priests, the Palace of the Governor, the Pelota Court and the zoological gardens and many others."[9]

"The first thing the Aztecs did when they settled at Tenochtitlan in 1325 was to build a temple to their god. This established the 'center', the heart, the sacred area from which the four main divisions of the city would radiate. The boundaries of sacred ground and secular ground were marked. The object was to reproduce cosmic order, the vision the Aztecs had of the universe, with the Great Temple as its center. According to the Aztecs, the universe was composed of three levels: the upper or celestial level formed of thirteen heavens of which the highest, *Omeyocan,* was where *duality* live. The second was the terrestrial level, from which the four directions of the universe (the cardinal points) radiate. The third level, formed of the nine stages leading to Mictlan, was the underworld, the world of the dead. This concept of the universe is duplicated in the ceremonial center; the Great Temple is the sacred spot par excellence where these levels meet. At the same time, the four basic divisions of the city and the three levels of the Aztec universe all originate in the Great Temple. The *terrestrial level* is represented by the base on which the Temple stands; here are the braziers and the largest number of offerings. The *heavens* are symbolized by the bodies by which the building rises; the thirteenth heaven, *Omeyocan*, is in the space occupied by the two shrines, the place of duality. the idea of duality is present even in the oldest stages of construction and is represented by two bases on a platform, each with a shrine at the top."[10]

"The main tower of all was in the center and was taller than all; it was dedicated to Huitzilopochtli or Tlacauepan Cuexcotzin. This tower was divided at the top in such a fashion that it appeared to be two, having two chapels or altars at the top, each one covered by a spire, and at the tip, each one of these had its different insignias or divices. In one of them, the more important, was the statue of Huitzilopochtli, whom they also called Ilhuicatl Xoxouhqui; in the other was the image of the god Tlaloc. Before each of these was a round stone like a large chopping block that they called techat, where they slew those that were sacrificed in honor of that god; and from the stone to below there was a torrent of blood from those they slew on it, and so it was on all the other towers. These towers had their fronts towards the west, and they mounted all these towers by very narrow, steep steps from the bottom to the top."[11]

"In the mid-1400s , the Aztecs formed the Triple Alliance with two other valley states, *Texcoco* and *Tlacopan,* to wage war against *Tlaxcala* and *Huejotzingo,* outside the valley to the east. The prisoners they took formed the diet of sacrificed warriors that their god *Huizilopochtli* demanded to keep the sun rising every day. For the dedication of Tenochtitlan's Great Temple in 1487, the Aztec emperor *Ahuizotl* had 20,000 captives sacrificed. In the second half of the 15th century, the Triple Alliance, now led by Aztec emperors, brought most of central Mexico from the Gulf coast to the Pacific (though not Tlaxcala) under its control. The total population of the empire's 38 provinces may have been about five million. The empire's purpose was to exact tribute of resources absent from the heartland -- such as jade, turquoise, cotton, paper, tobacco, rubber, expendable humans for sacrificial purposes, lowland fruits and vegetables,

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[9] Archaeological Mexico. Marcia Castro Leal Bonechi, Pg 9.
[10] Official Guide to the Great Temple. Pg. 20.
[11] Sahagun from Official Guide to the Great Temple, pg. 11.

cacao and precious feathers -- which were needed for the glorification of its elite and to support the many nonproductive servants of its war-oriented state. Like the Maya, the Aztecs believed they lived in a world whose predecessors had been destroyed by the death of the sun, wiping out humanity each time. Human sacrifices were designed to keep the sun alive."[12]

"In 1524, a scant three years after the conquest of Mexico, a group of Aztec scholars spoke with the first Franciscan missionaries to arrive in the newly founded capital of Mexico City. These were some of the words spoken by the Aztec in defense of their beliefs:

You said that we know not the Lord of the Close Vicinity, to Whom the heavens and earth belong. You said that our gods are not true gods. New words are these that you speak; because of them we are disturbed, because of them we are troubled. For our ancestors before us, who lived upon the earth, were unaccustomed to speak thus. From them we have inherited our pattern of life which in truth did they hold; in reverence they held, they honoured our gods.

This remarkable dialogue, recorded in the works of Fray Bernardino de Sahagun, marks an initial exchange between two worlds of religious thought that had developed entirely independently of one another for thousands of years."[13]

"The **MAYA** culture occupied the most extensive geographical area in Mesoamerica, overflowed the Mexican territory into parts of Central America; as a result there were marked regional differences which were manifested, in particular, in distinct artistic styles. The Mayas produced imposing structures, thanks to the fact that they used materials such as limestone. The stone made it possible to obtain a type of roof which endowed the buildings with a unique style and in addition facilitated the preservation throughout the centuries. The period in which the great Maya ceremonial centers and cities reached their zenith was between the years 300-1000 AD; architectural complexes, generally set up on large platforms, spread out over extensive areas. Some of the temples were so tall that they seemed to compete with the trees of the tropical forests that frequently surrounded them. At the same time other low horizontal structures contained dozens of apartments in which the priests and governors of these places lived. All were decorated with figures in stone or stucco that covered the walls and ceilings, and in some cases with wall paintings depicting religious or historical scenes, unmatched for their beauty in America. The steles were part of the architectural complexes, and their use was not limited to the Maya, even though they achieved a distinctive expression here, which served to record important historical, political or religious events. The Mayas had various calendars: the ritual calendar, or 260 days, and solar calendar of 360 days and fraction. But thanks to their knowledge of astronomy and mathematics, they also discovered the Venusian cycle of 584 days and established a register which counted the passage of time starting from an arbitrarily established date, like the year zero for western culture. Dates were annotated in a vigesimal system with numbers of distinct values. Bar-five; dot-one; shell-zero; placed in vertical columns, with a specific value according to the position occupied."[14]

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[12] Lonely Planet. 1995

[13] Taube, Karl. Aztec and Maya Myths. British Museum Press, 1993. Pg. 31

[14] Archaeological Mexical. Marcia Castro Leal. Bonechi. Pg. 13-14

"The Maya had a very complex writing system, with 300 to 500 symbols, and they also refined the calendar possessed by other pre-Hispanic peoples into a tool for recording earthly and heavenly events. They could predict eclipses of the sun and the movements of the moon and Venus. Religion permeated every facet of Mayan life. The Maya believed in predestination and were fervent astrologers, but they also carried out elaborate rituals to win the gods' favors."[15]

"The cult of the god *QUETZALCOATL* (the plumed, or feathered, serpent) developed in Teotihuacan and continued among the Toltecs, Maya, and Aztecs. Micoatl, the first leader of the Toltec people, had a son who took the names of Quetzalcoatl, became leader of the Toltecs, and founded their new capital (present-day Tula) around AD999. According to one story he threw himself on to a funeral pyre on the beach and ascended to the skies to become the morning star and ruler of time. Another story say he set out to sea on a raft of snakes and vanished, while yet another related that he reached the Yucatan, where the cult of Quetzalcoatl (or Kukulcan) was introduced by the Maya culture. When Quetzalcoatl set sail, he vowed to return from the east and claim his land. The year prophesied for this coincided with the arrival of Cortes and his band in 1519."[16]

"Nowadays, the Mayan civilization is considered the most interesting of the pre-Columbian America. The major difference between the Mayans and other pre-Hispanic civilizations is the Mayan pacifist ideology, and their conviction to use weapons only in case of real need. For this reason, the Mayan life story is not made up of wars, expeditions and conquests, but of migration to fertile lands, founding of cities, offering monuments to their gods, and establishing pacts of alliance between cities."[17]

"On the eve of the Spanish conquest, many Mexican societies, including the Aztecs, were structurally similar. Each was politically centralized and divided into classes, with many people occupied in specialist tasks, including professional priests. Agriculture was productive despite the lack of draft animals, metal tools and the wheel. Maize tortillas and maize gruel were staple foods. Beans provided important protein, and a great variety of other crops were grown in different regions, from squashes, tomatoes and chilies to avocados, peanuts, papayas, and pineapples. Luxury foods for the elite included turkey, domesticated hairless dog, game and chocolate drinks.. Exchange of foods between different regions was an important reason for trade. All peoples worshipped a variety of powerful gods (often shared with other cultures), some of which demanded human sacrifices. War was widespread, often in connection with the need to take prisoners for sacrifice. Ancient Mexican civilization, nearly 3000 years old, was shattered in two short years from 1519 to 1521. A tiny group of Spanish invaders destroyed the Aztec empire, brought a new religion and reduced the native people to second-class citizens and slaves. So mutually alien were the newcomers and Indians that each doubted whether the other was human. The Pope gave the Indians the benefit of the doubt in 1537."[18]

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[15] Lonely Planet, 1995

[16] Mexico Thomas Cook Passport Books 1995 pg 17

[17] The Mayans Universal Image Enterprise, 1993 Pg 7

[18] Lonely Planet, 1995

EVALUATION

Students can be tested orally or written using the worksheet as a study guide.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Ruiz, Octavio Madigan, et al. Many Faces of Mexico, Resource Center of The Americas, 1995.

Taube, Karl: Aztec and Maya Myths, British Museum Press, 1993.

A PAST STILL PRESENT-
ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS OF MEXICO
WORKSHEET

MATCHING:

_____1. Olmecs	A. Feathered Serpent
_____2. Teotihuacan	B. Mexicas
_____3. Tlaloc	C. Lived in parts of Central America
_____4. Quetzalcoatl	D. Ceremonial building
_____5. Chalchiutlicue	E. First great civilization of Mexico
_____6. Aztec	F. God of Rain
_____7. Tenochititlan	G. Goddess of Water
_____8. Great Temple	H. Ball Court
_____9. Pelota Court	I. Corn
_____10. Omeyocan	J. Aztec Emperor
_____11. Ahuizotl	K. Established in 1325 AD
_____12. Maya	L. Where *duality* live
_____13. Maize	M. "City of the Gods"

FILL IN THE BLANK:

1. Mexico is a country with a _____ and _____ past.

2. William Faulkner said: _____.

3. Before the Spanish explorers came to this land of Mexico in 1519 there were an estimated _____Indian inhabitants who had been living under an organized social structure for over _____ years.

4.There are over _____ Native Mexicans here speaking nearly _____ languages and dialects.

5. According to archeologists, the first people are believed to arrived in America from Asia across the _____ as early as _____.

6. The highly developed civilizations flourished from _____.

7. About 3000 years ago, at the southern edge of the Gulf of Mexico, the _____ emerged as the first great civilization in Mesoamerica.

8. About _____ the first villages were established and crops such as _____, _____,_____ were cultivated.

9. The finest example of the Classical Period is **Teotihuacan,** called the "_____".

10. The governing class at its head probably consisted of _____-_____ who had knowledge of the _____ ,_____, the use of the _____ and the rites and ceremonies dedicated to the gods.

11. Teotihuacan had systems for utilizing _____ and collecting _____.

12. Religion occupied a position of prime importance, and the gods worshipped were associated with water, the earth and fertility. They included *Tlaloc*, the god of _____, *Chalchiutlicue*, the goddess of _____, and *Quetzalcoatl*, the _____.

13. Teotihuacan became an imperialistic state after _____. At its peak it may have controlled the southern two-thirds of _____, all of _____ and _____and bits of _____ and _____.

14. The _____ or _____ lived in the Valley of Mexico. There they founded their city which they called **Mexico-Tenochititlan** in _____.

15. The first thing the Aztecs did when they settled at Tenochtitlan in 1325 was to _____to their god. It was called the _____ and was the center of the city.

16. According to the Aztecs, the universe was composed of _____levels: the upper or celestial level formed of thirteen heavens of which the highest, _____, was where _____ live.

17. In the mid-1400s , the Aztecs formed the _____with two other valley states, *Texcoco* and *Tlacopan.*

18. For the dedication of Tenochtitlan's Great Temple in 1487, the Aztec emperor *Ahuizotl* had _____captives sacrificed.

19. Like the Maya, the _____ believed they lived in a world whose predecessors had been destroyed by the death of the sun, wiping out humanity each time. _____ were designed to keep the sun alive.

20. The _____culture occupied the most extensive geographical area in Mesoamerica, overflowed the Mexican territory into parts of _____.

21. The Mayas built huge structures using _____ as a building material.

22. The Mayas had various _____: the ritual calendar, or _____days, and solar calendar of _____days and fraction.

23. The Maya had a very complex writing system, with _____ symbols.

LIST FIVE WAYS IN WHICH THE AZTEC AND MAYA CIVILIZATIONS WERE SIMILAR:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

LIST FIVE WAYS IN WHICH THESE CIVILIZATIONS WERE DIFFERENT:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

COMMENT ON THE FOLLOWING QUOTE:

You said that we know not the Lord of the Close Vicinity, to Whom the heavens and earth belong. You said that our gods are not true gods. New words are these that you speak; because of them we are disturbed, because of them we are troubled. For our ancestors before us, who lived upon the earth, were unaccustomed to speak thus. From them we have inherited our pattern of life which in truth did they hold; in reverence they held, they honoured our gods.

A PAST STILL PRESENT-
ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS OF MEXICO
WORKSHEET --- Answer Key

MATCHING:

E	1. Olmecs	A. Feathered Serpent
M	2. Teotihuacan	B. Mexicas
F	3. Tlaloc	C. Lived in parts of Central America
A	4. Quetzalcoatl	D. Ceremonial building
G	5. Chalchiutlicue	E. First great civilization of Mexico
B	6. Aztec	F. God of Rain
K	7. Tenochititlan	G. Goddess of Water
D	8. Great Temple	H. Ball Court
H	9. Pelota Court	I. Corn
L	10. Omeyocan	J. Aztec Emperor
J	11. Ahuizotl	K. Established in 1325 AD
C	12. Maya	L. Where *duality* live
I	13. Maize	M. "City of the Gods"

FILL IN THE BLANK:

1. Mexico is a country with a _____(rich and glorious past)

2. William Faulkner said: _____('The past is not dead. It's not even past.')

3. Before the Spanish explorers came to this land of Mexico in 1519 there were an estimated _____(10 million) Indian inhabitants who had been living under an organized social structure for over _____(3,000) years.

4.There are over _____(20 million) Native Mexicans here speaking nearly _____(60) languages and dialects.

5. According to archeologists, the first people are believed to arrived in America from Asia across the _____(Bering Strait) as early as _____(50,000 BC.)

6. The highly developed civilizations flourished from _____(1200 BC to 1521 AD.)

7. Some 3000 years ago, at the southern edge of the Gulf of Mexico, the _____(**OLMECS)** emerged as the first great civilization in Mesoamerica.

8. About _____(2000 BC) the first villages were established and crops such as _____(beans, corn and squash) were cultivated.

9. The finest example of the Classical Period is **Teotihuacan,** called the "_____"(City of the Gods"),

10. The governing class at its head probably consisted of _____ (priest-kings) who had knowledge of the _____ (stars),_____(writing), the use of the _____(calendar) and the rites and ceremonies dedicated to the gods.

11. Teotihuacan had systems for utilizing _____ (underground water) and collecting _____(rain).

12. Religion occupied a position of prime importance, and the gods worshipped were associated with water, the earth and fertility. They included *Tlaloc*, the god of _____(rain), *Chalchiutlicue*, the goddess of _____(Water), and *Quetzalcoatl*, the _____(Feathered Serpent).

13. Teotihuacan became an imperialistic state after _____(400 AD.) At its peak it may have controlled the southern two-thirds of _____(Mexico), all of _____(Guatemala) and _____(Belize) and bits of _____(Honduras) and _____(El Salvador).

14. The _____**(AZTEC) or** _____**(MEXICAS)** lived in the Valley of Mexico. There they founded their city which they called **Mexico-Tenochititlan** in _____(1325 AD.)

15. The first thing the Aztecs did when they settled at Tenochtitlan in 1325 was to _____(build a temple) to their god. It was called the _____(Great Temple) and was the center of the city.

16. According to the Aztecs, the universe was composed of _____(three) levels: the upper or celestial level formed of thirteen heavens of which the highest, _____(*Omeyocan),* was where _____(*duality)* live.

17. In the mid-1400s , the Aztecs formed the _____(Triple Alliance) with two other valley states, *Texcoco* and *Tlacopan.*

18. For the dedication of Tenochtitlan's Great Temple in 1487, the Aztec emperor *Ahuizotl* had _____(20,000) captives sacrificed.

19. Like the Maya, the _____(Aztecs) believed they lived in a world whose predecessors had been destroyed by the death of the sun, wiping out humanity each time. _____(Human sacrifices) were designed to keep the sun alive.

20. The _____**(MAYA)** culture occupied the most extensive geographical area in Mesoamerica, overflowed the Mexican territory into parts of _____(Central America).

21. The Mayas built huge structures using _____(limestone) as a building material.

22. The Mayas had various _____(calendars): the ritual calendar, or _____(260) days, and solar calendar of _____(360)days and fraction.

23. The Maya had a very complex writing system, with _____(300 to 500) symbols.

AZTEC CODICES

The Aztecs recorded their history in codices, or manuscripts, that included symbols and drawings portraying their actions, concepts and emotions. Most of the drawings used in this lesson to describe the conquest are from Book Twelve of the Florentine Codex and the Lienzo de Tlaxcala Codex.

A. Ten years before the Spanish came, the Aztec people saw a comet that looked like a flaming ear of corn that seemed to bleed fire. When they saw this strange wonder, they were amazed and frightened, and they spoke of it constantly, trying to interpret its meaning. It was seen as a bad omen.

B. The Aztec messengers brought gifts of welcome to the Spanish on board their ships.

C. After receiving the gifts, the messengers were chained, and a cannon was fired. The Aztecs fainted away in fear.

D. The Spanish helped revive the Aztec messengers by giving them wine to drink and then some food.

E. The Spanish followed this route from Veracruz through Tlaxcala to Tenochtitlán.

F. The Spanish marched toward Tenochtitlán, past the volcano of Popocatépetl. On their journey they recruited allies from Tlaxcala.

G. Doña Marina was sold as a slave and given to Cortés.

H. At a meeting between Cortés, Moctezuma and the Aztec chieftains, gifts of food, flowers, and gold necklaces were given to Cortés. Doña Marina is the interpreter.

I. The Spanish gathered all the gifts of gold and melted them down into ingots.

J. The Spanish massacre of the Aztecs during their holiday celebration, the Toxcatl, in honor of their god Huitzilopochtli.

K. The Spanish and their allies fled across the causeway to the mainland while being attacked by the Aztec warriors. This is known as The Sad Night, or *La Noche Triste*.

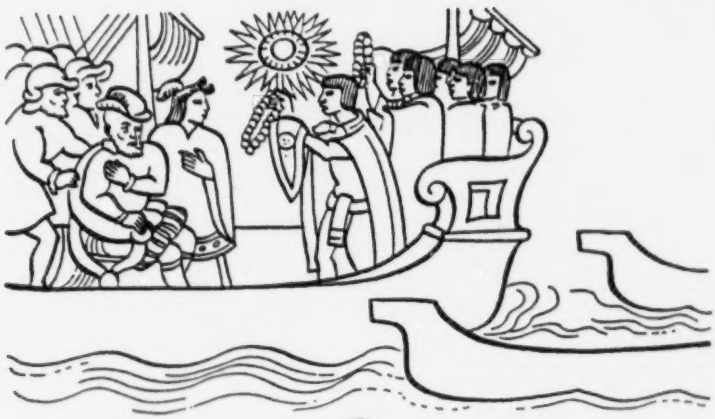
L. A terrible plague of smallpox spread through Tenochtitlán, killing or debilitating thousands of men, women and children.

M. The Spanish returned. They rebuilt their ships on the lake surrounding Tenochtitlán, and captured the city in 80 days.

N. The Aztecs never surrendered, but more than 240,000 were killed.

O. The remaining Aztecs fled Tenochtitlán while the Spanish searched for gold.

A



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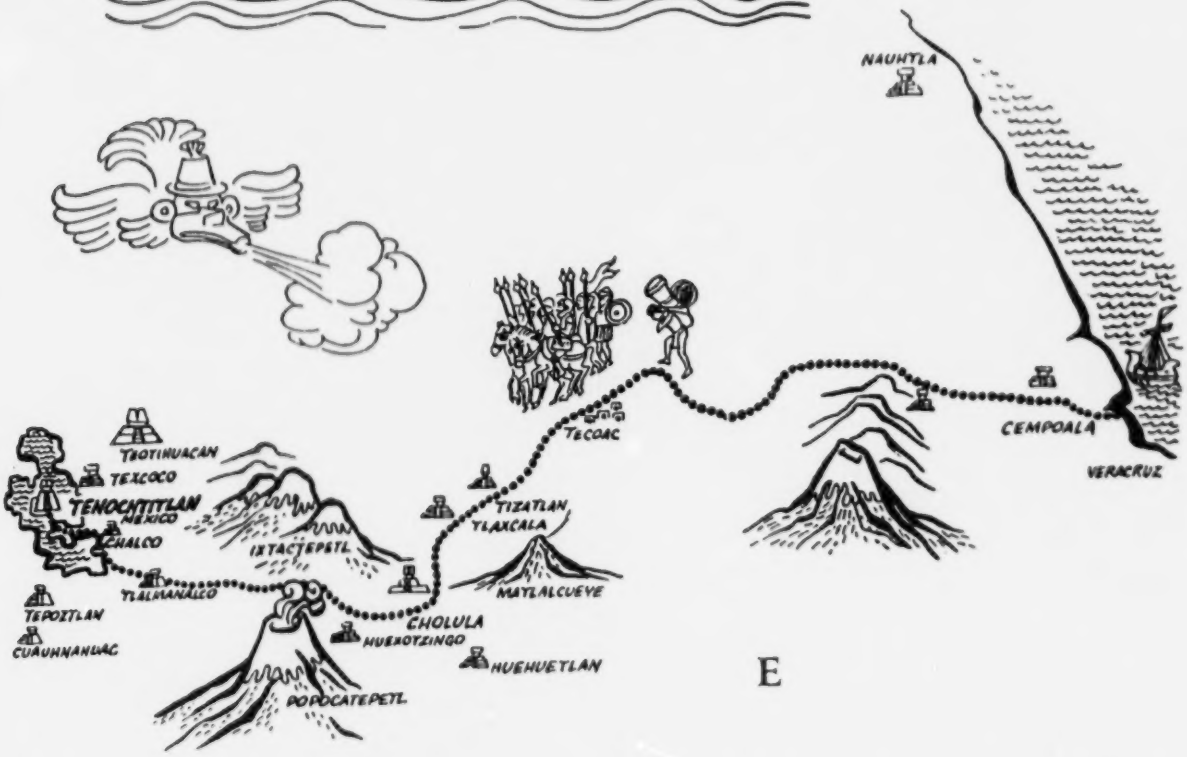
D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CUAUHNAHUAC
TECOAC
TIZATLAN
TLAXCALA
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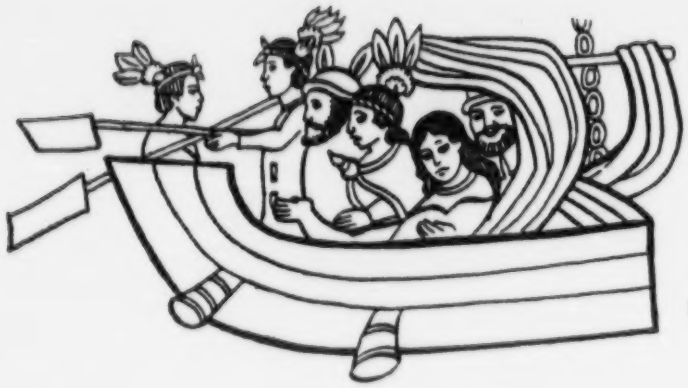
F



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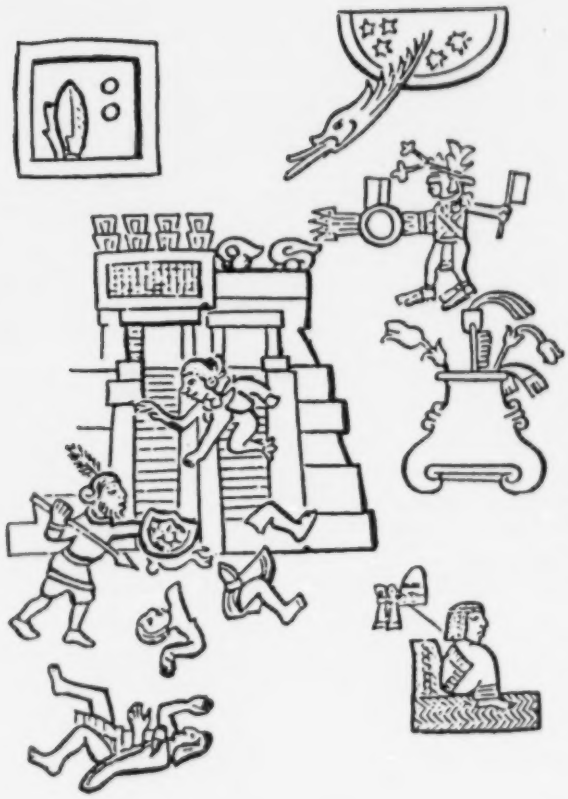

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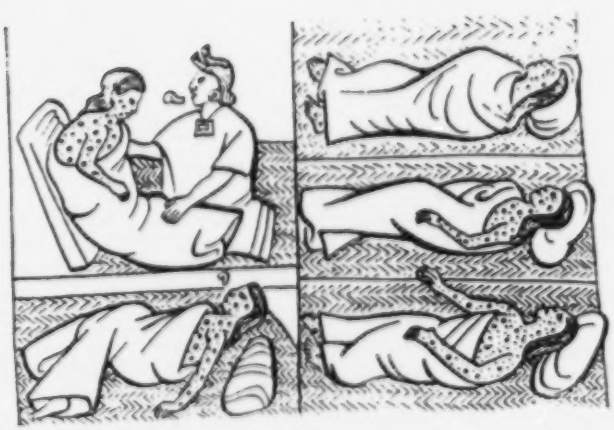

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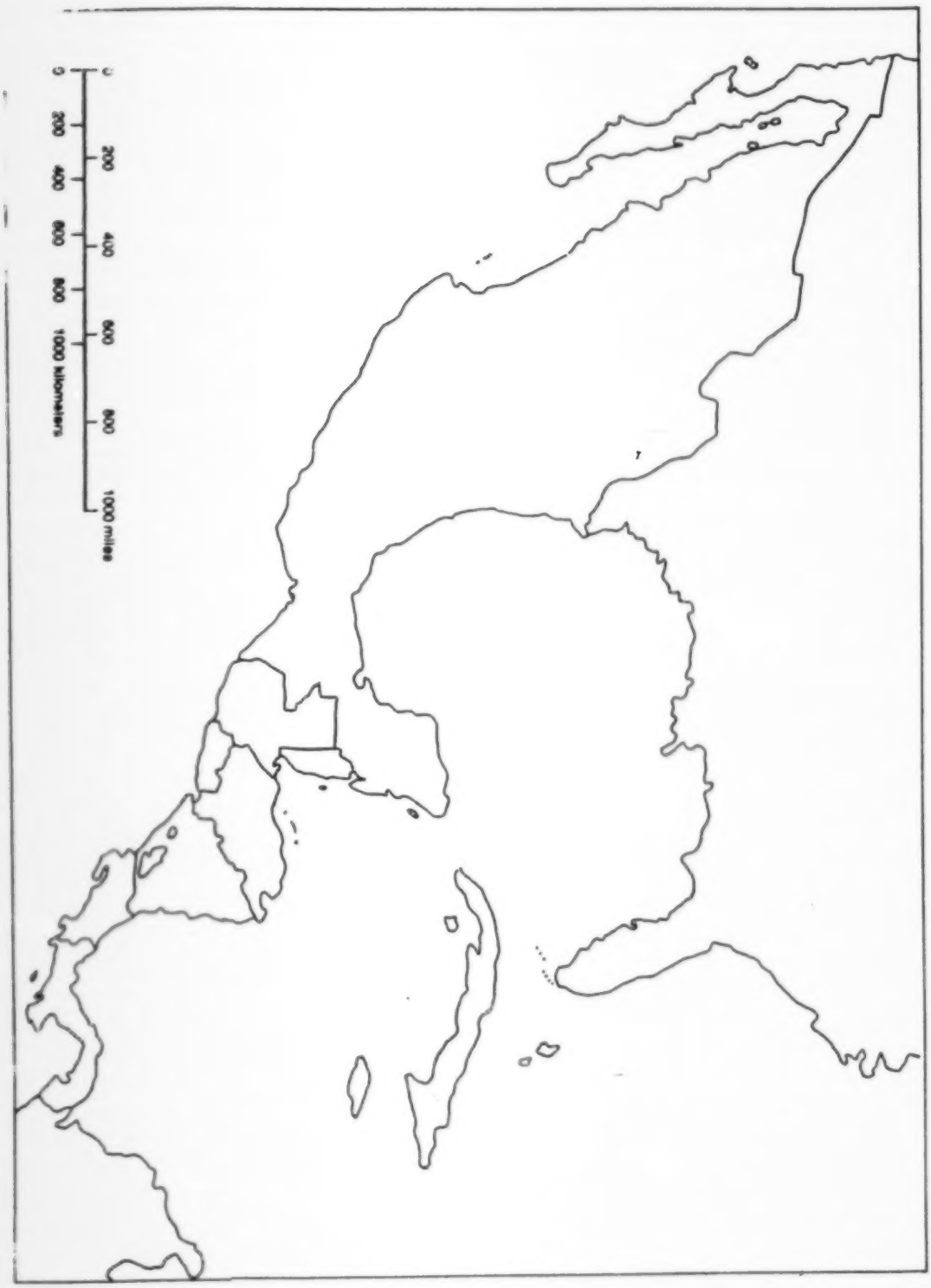
42

M

N

O

Map of Mexico and Central America



Toda luna, toda ano,

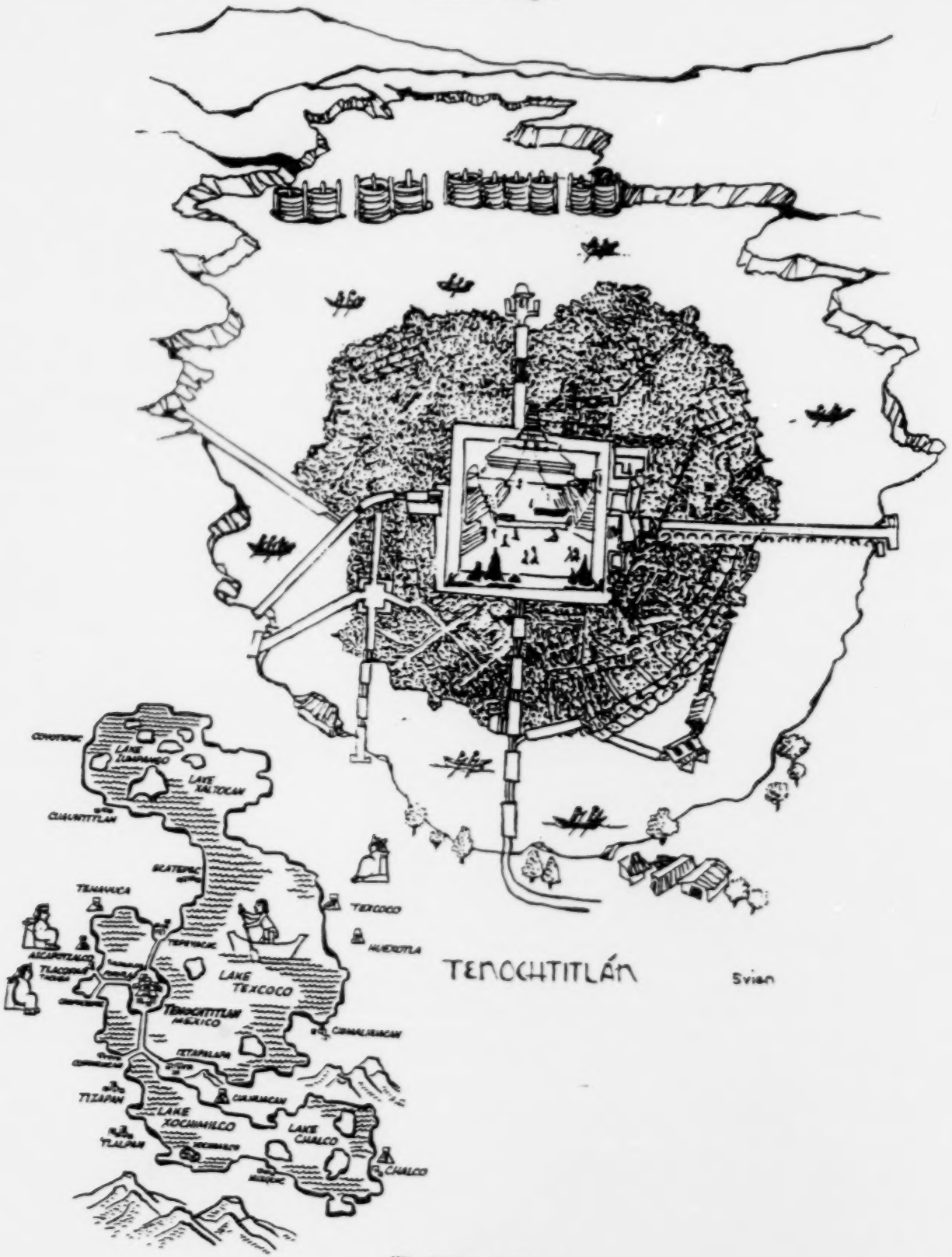
Todo dia, todo viento,

Camina y pasa tambien,

Tambien toda saugre llega

al lugar de su quietud.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



The Valley of Mexico

47

Ancient Indigenous Civilizations

The story of the people of Mexico began long before the invasion by the Spanish and the arrival of the Europeans. Mexican history includes the stories of many people scattered across a vast area of land. Different groups of people at various stages of cultural, technological and social development shared the land. The movement and mingling of these groups of people are part of the Mexican story.

The original inhabitants of the area created communities and established networks of trails and trade routes. They adapted to the land to meet their needs of survival, including food, shelter, clothing, health and security. Notable imperial city states were founded by the Aztecs and Mayans. The Aztec people extended their empire in ways similar to the expansion of the Roman Empire in Europe. They dominated people and land area using force and trade, and eventually established control of these areas.

This region at various times had some of the most highly developed and wealthy cultures in the world. These cultures had very sophisticated political, military, economic and religious systems, in addition to many achievements in the arts. From the northern territories of the country to the south, the major groups of people and their civilizations included the Olmecs, the Zapotecs, the Mayans, the Toltecs and the Aztecs. Other less well known groups, such as the Tarascans, also achieved a high level of development. It appears that these cultures exerted considerable influence upon one another, often blending and merging over long periods of time.

These civilizations did not have wholly separate characteristics, but shared much in common with each other. The periods in which some cultures flourished and waned often overlapped with other cultures.

The Olmecs developed their civilization along the gulf coast between 1200 BC–250 AD. They lived mainly in the territory that is now called Veracruz. Mexicans today call the Olmec culture the "mother culture" because of the Olmecs' aptitude and accomplishments in science, art and philosophy. The Olmec are recognized by their gigantic artifacts in the image of the jaguar, a creature with human and feline aspects.

The Zapotecs had commercial contacts with the Olmecs. The Zapotec people developed a strong economy and located their center at a place named Monte Albán on the southwestern Pacific coast. This Zapotec center at Monte Albán reached a peak of influence and power at about 500 AD.

The Teotihuacán culture developed during the same time period and survived into the seventh century. Their center of power was located approximately 30 miles northeast of what is now Mexico City, the modern capital of Mexico. Although little is known about their civilization, the Teotihuacáns were exceptional in a number of areas including building. The sudden abandonment of their main city has baffled historians and archaeologists. We know about the Teotihuacáns through their influence in art, politics and commerce throughout Mesoamerica.

The Mayan civilization also is part of Mexico's history. Mayan people lived in the south as early as 900 BC, and established centers of power that were inhabited by 500 to 10,000 people. One of the most famous centers in the years from 300 BC to 800 AD was at Tikal in the southern low lands, now a part of Guatemala. It was occupied by as many as 50,000 inhabitants and may have been one of most populous cities in the world at that time.

The Toltec people established themselves between 900 and 1100 AD in the region around the city of Tula in central Mexico. In that time, the Toltecs became a dominant force throughout Mesoamerica and were known primarily for their military might and their heroic deeds which made them appear mystical. During its brief 200 years of dominance, the Toltec culture influenced people as far south as what is now Costa Rica and up into what is now the southwestern United States. Although Toltec power diminished after 1200 AD, many aspects of their culture were incorporated within the expanding Aztec civilization.

The Aztecs are the most well known of the indigenous civilizations. The Aztec people and their empire extended from the middle highlands of Mexico to as far south as what is now Nicaragua and El Salvador. In 1325, the city of Tenochtitlán was founded as the center of the Aztec empire. The Mexico City which we know today is built on the ruins of Tenochtitlán. The city flourished for about 194 years until the arrival of Spaniards in 1519. Ithas been calculated that the city of Tenochtitlán housed between 200,000-300,000 inhabitants.

Estimates on the number of people in this entire region on the eve of the 1519 invasion vary greatly, but most scholars estimate that approximately 20 million people lived in the region. By 1600 — less than 100 years after the arrival of the Europeans — the Indian population had declined by 95 percent.

There were few land areas where people had no contact with Europeans and where populations did not decrease significantly. Major causes of the decrease in population were death from new diseases, over-work, ill treatment, and systematic killing. Like the Black Plague that was taking lives in Europe, this was called the "Black Legend."

By 1650 the Indian population began to increase again. This was primarily due to the introduction of new laws that abolished some of the worst excesses of exploitation. Those who survived had also developed resistance to diseases, improved their diet, and made some adaptation to the demands of a new way of life under Spanish rule.

However, the conquest begun in 1519 by the Spanish broke up the dynamic development of indigenous cultures in Mesoamerica. As a result, the destiny of the inhabitants of this region and the entire western hemisphere changed forever.

Chart below: Gerhard, Peter. *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*. Norman, Oklahoma. University of Oklahoma Press. 1993.

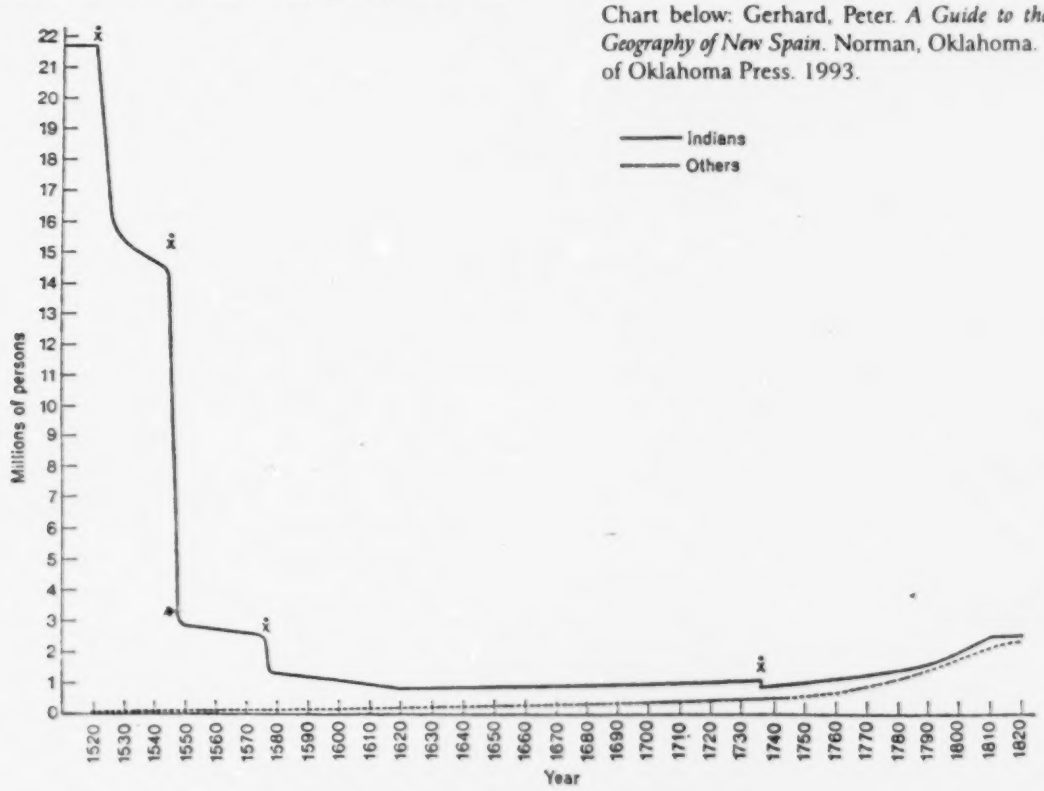
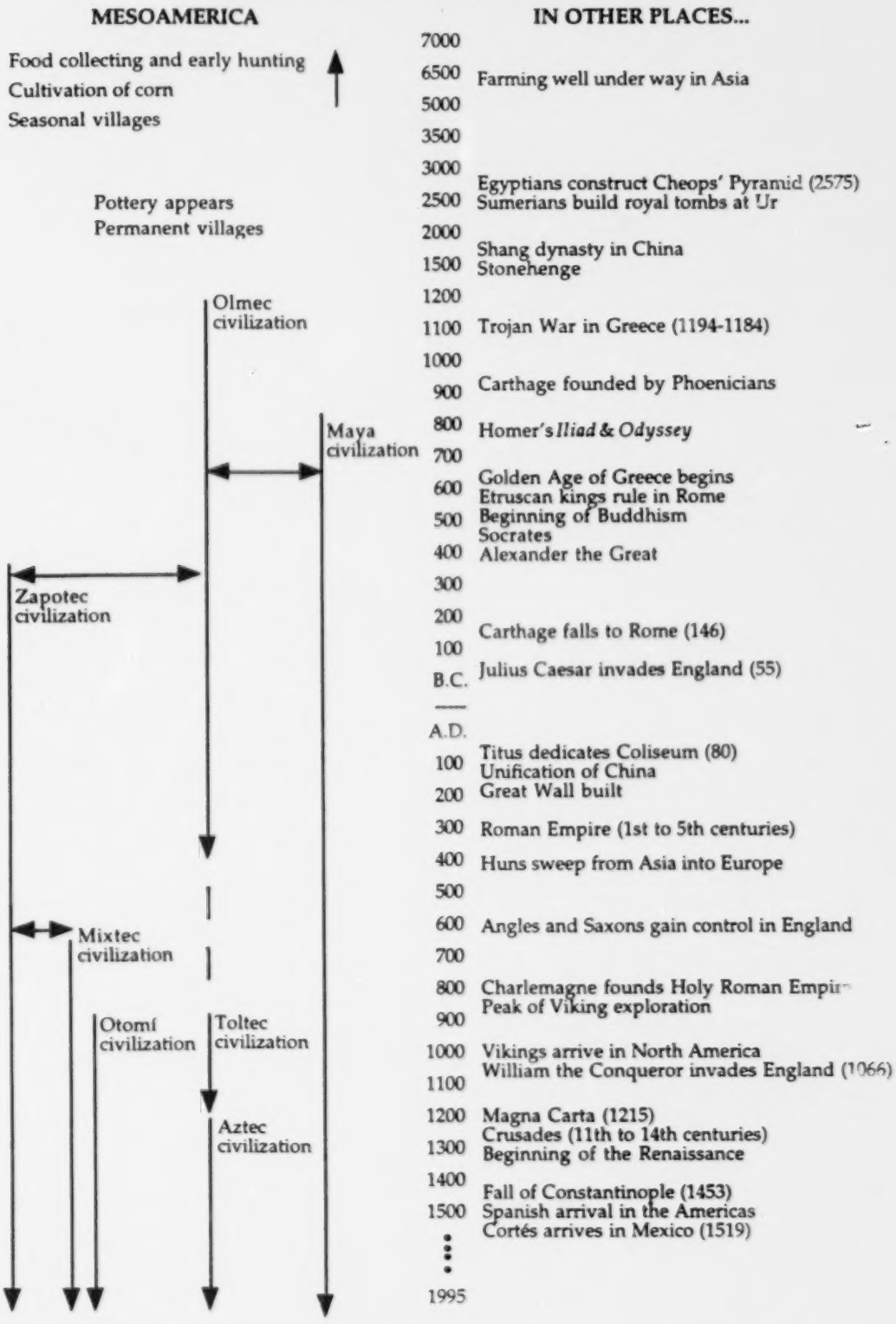
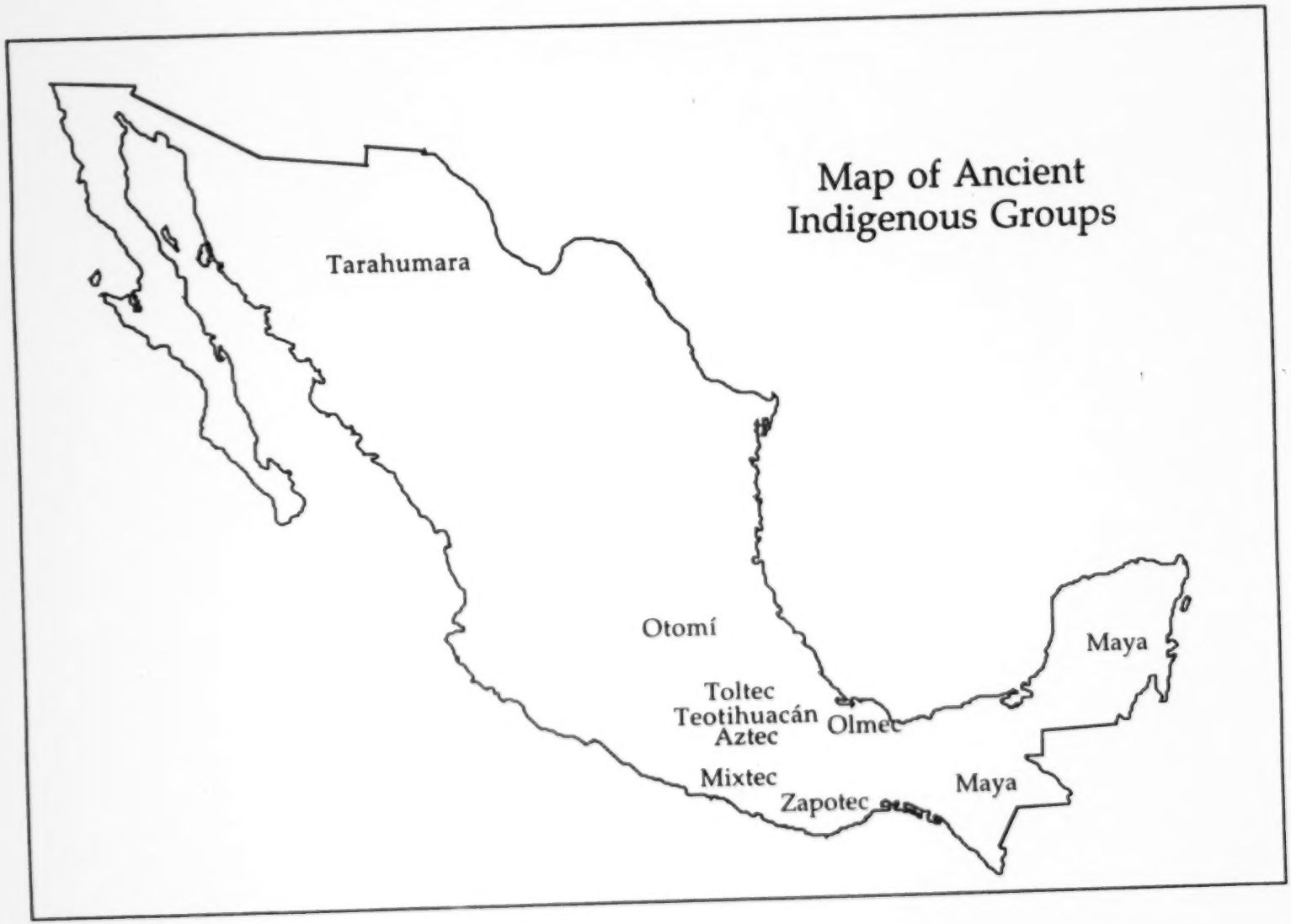


FIGURE 1. The decline and recovery of the native population

COMPARATIVE CHRONOLOGY




Map of Ancient
Indigenous Groups
Tarahumara
Otomí
Toltec
Teotihuacán
Aztec
Olmec
Maya
Mixtec
Zapotec
Maya

	REGION 1 North	**REGION 2** North Central	**REGION 3** South Central
Who lived in the region?			
Where did they live?			
How did they live? What kinds of houses, food and clothing did they have?			
What were some of their cultural practices?			
What kinds of transportation did they use?			
Did they migrate or have permanent settlements or cities?			
What kinds of trade did they engage in with other people?			

	REGION 4 Gulf Coast	**REGION 5** Pacific Southwest	**REGION 6** Southeast
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Region 1—North

The Tarahumara

The Tarahumara (tar-ah-ou-MAR-ah) lived in the north in what is now the state of Chihuahua (chee-WAH-wah). This area has different ecological regions—the highlands and the lowlands. The Tarahumara lived in the highlands, in the mountains and valleys of the Sierra Madre. To build their houses, they used materials that were available locally, such as pine, clay and branches. Tarahumara people also lived in caves.

The Tarahumara spoke their own language but were linguistically related to other people in the region. They were nomadic and shared hunting and harvesting lands with other people. The Tarahumara raised most of their own food and made most of their clothing from cloth they wove. They grew corn, the staple of their diet, on their mountainous plots of land. They got water for drinking, washing and livestock from the streams in the valleys. In the dry season, water was scarce and the streams often became polluted, causing health problems.

The original name of the Tarahumara was Raramuri (rahr-ah-MOU-ree), which in the Tarahumara language means foot runners. The Tarahumara were known for their great long-distance running abilities. They held competitions that brought together women and men runners from the entire region.

Family groups were the basic structure of these early dwellers of northern Mexico. Basic education took place within the home, as children learned from their elders, other family members and their surroundings.

When the Spanish invaded their region, the Tarahumara fiercely resisted their settlements. They chose to be isolated from the larger culture of Mexico and the changes that took place in the rest of the world.

Region 2—North Central

The Otomí

Evidence of Otomí (oh-toe-ME) settlements in Mexico first appeared around 900 AD, the same time as the rise of the Toltec (TOLL-tek) civilization. For centuries, the Otomí lived in what is now central Mexico. In this dry, rocky region, the Otomí began to cultivate corn, beans and a plant called the maguey (ma-GAY). This plant provided a honey water to drink, fibers for weaving cloth, and leaves used for constructing houses. Though this plant is important to people throughout Mexico, it was of special value to the Otomí, and they referred to it as "Mother." The maguey plant helped the Otomí survive in the arid environment that was their home.

Between the 10th and 14th centuries, the Otomí often were able to resist conquest by the larger, more complex civilizations by frequently moving from place to place. At various times, they were invaded by the Toltecs and Aztecs, but there was very little influence on their culture and customs by these groups. While Toltecs and Aztecs built mammoth stone temples and pyramids, the Otomí made bricks to build huts in which they lived.

The Otomí made paper by pounding bark from trees with rocks. The paper, called *amate* (ah-MAH-tay) was given to a shaman or healer who cut symbolic figures out of paper that were used in sacred rites.

During the early 14th century, the Otomí people settled along a huge lake, where first Tenochtitlán (ten-o-shteet-LON) and then Mexico City were built. When pressure from neighboring groups mounted, such as from the Aztecs, the Otomí headed north and settled there. Still part of the Aztec territory, many Otomí people were captured and taken as slaves. Other Otomí became soldiers or mercenaries and integrated into other societies.

In 1531, when the Spanish armies moved northwest into the place that is now called Querétaro (care-ATE-tah-ro), Otomí leaders were able to convince the invaders to put down their guns and fight it out with bare fists. For 12 hours they fought, like a vast boxing match, man to man. At sunset, when both sides were exhausted and anxious for the fight to end, there was an omen in the sky that ended the fight. Legend says they embraced each other and joined as brothers. However, later the Spaniards took over the area completely and forced the Otomí people to work on plantations and find gold for them.

Region 3—South Central

The Toltec

The Toltec (TOLL-tek) were a complex, multi-ethnic group of people who lived to the north and west of the Valley of Mexico in what is now the state of Hidalgo (he-DAHL-go). Between the 9th and 13th centuries AD, the Toltecs controlled much of central Mexico and developed the site of Tula (TOO-lah), (also called Tollan, "place of the reeds") into a major center. The Toltec's social, artistic and cultural life was influenced by the Olmecs, who traveled and traded throughout central Mexico. When the Olmecs dispersed, it is believed that many joined the Toltecs.

Tula was built in the 10th century. In its pyramids and palaces are many representations of one of the god-kings, Quetzalcóatl (ket-zal-CO-at-el), the Feathered Serpent. Although he was a figure among many groups, the Toltecs' versions portray Quetzalcóatl as a gentle god who disliked violence and human sacrifice. Legends say that Quetzalcóatl was also the name of a Toltec leader who was forced to leave Tula and went somewhere to the east. He said he would return in the Year One of the next 52 year calendar cycle. That happened to be 1519, the year that the Spanish arrived.

Toltec men wore loincloths with tunics or ponchos. The women wore *huipiles* (wee-PEELS) and sarongs, and both men and women wore sandals. The wealthy pierced their noses, cheeks and earlobes and decorated themselves with jewels and feathers. Most people were rural farmers and suburban artisans who lived in stone, earth and adobe brick houses. Families often shared the same occupation and lived together in adjoining houses that shared a common interior courtyard. Farming was done in large fields called *milpas* outside of the villages and in small plots next to the houses. Toltec farmers cultivated maize (corn), beans, chili peppers, amaranth, squash, cotton and the maguey (ma-GAY) plant. Meat was a rare "festival food" rather than a dietary staple.

The name Toltec means "artisan" and indeed, many people were artisans who produced building blocks, pottery, baskets, obsidian tools, textiles, jewelry, and other objects. The Toltec people developed an elaborate market and trade system through which they were able to obtain materials and sell their products. Through this system, they spread their influence all the way to the southwest part of what is now the US.

Around 1200 AD, political instability and pressure from outside groups had about the decline of Tula and civilization. Many Toltecs joined migration south into the Valley where they settled in several and assimilated into other cultures. art, culture and social organization profound influence on the Aztecs later settled in much of the same

Region 4—Gulf Coast

The Olmec

The Olmec (OHL-mek) civilization flourished between about 1200 BC and 300 AD. The Maya, Zapotec (SAH-po-tek) and Toltec peoples, who are known for their high social, artistic and cultural achievements, most likely drew many ideas from the Olmecs.

The Olmec people lived primarily in the Veracruz area. They traveled and traded across the southern highlands to the Pacific Ocean and south to what are now Guatemala and El Salvador. These are the areas where they found jade, which was extremely valuable to their artwork.

The Olmec people lived in areas of tropical jungle where there was an abundance of rubber. The name Olmec in their language means "rubber people." Whether the Olmec were the people who originally domesticated corn is unknown, but it was their staple food and they ground it and prepared it as tortillas. They also raised beans and squash. The jungle made farming difficult, so to grow these crops they used a "slash and burn" technique. Just before the rains came at the end of May, they burned the plot of land and the remaining ash fertilized the soil. When the rains began, corn seeds were dropped in holes made in the ashes with a digging stick. After about two harvests, they left the plot to lie fallow and recover its fertility. They irrigated the land, using the natural rising and falling pattern of the rivers. The Olmec also ate fish, turtles, shellfish, deer and peccary, a pig-like animal.

The Olmecs lived in houses made of bamboo poles and covered with thatched roofs. Although small villages were most common, larger community centers housed their leaders. In addition, the Olmec built ceremonial centers with pyramids, which were the burial sites of their rulers. Some community centers contained ball fields. The oldest ball game of Mesoamerica was played by the Olmec, using a rubber ball. Spectators lined the walls on each side of the playing field to watch the players try to throw the ball through a hole in a protruding stone in the wall on the side of the field.

Huge stone carvings of the heads of kings are among the artworks of the Olmec. One head weighed 18 tons; it was carved without the help of metal tools and hauled without the aid of the wheel. They also carved miniatures of ordinary people and jaguars; some are molded in clay while others were carved in jade, serpentine and granite. The Olmec had a calendar system which measured time in 52 year increments. At the end of 52 years, the calendar started over.

Region 5—Pacific Southwest

The Zapotec

The Zapotecs (SAH-po-tek) lived in what is now the state of Oaxaca (wah-HA-kah) in southern Mexico. During the height of their civilization about 2,500 years ago it is estimated there were 300,000 Zapotecs.

Their main centers were at Monte Albán and Mitla. Monte Albán was not built by the Zapotec people, but it was occupied by them when they moved into the region. It was probably constructed by the Olmec, but the murals that cover the walls of the temples and the pyramids were painted by the Zapotec. Monte Albán was a large and flourishing city built high on a mountain and surrounded by houses built into the terraced slopes that fall away from the mountain.

The Zapotec had a calendar that was central to their religion. The calendar symbols, or glyphs, were painted in temples and on tombs. They also created jaguars and birds out of precious metals. The intricately decorated pottery that the Zapotec made was both for everyday use and for ceremonies.

Zapotecs were primarily farmers. They grew corn that they ground for tortillas, harvested cacao beans for a chocolate beverage, and ate cactus fruits, nuts and avocados. They utilized the maguey (ma-GAY) plant in many different ways, such as for food, syrup, a fermented drink, and fiber for their clothing. Most of the farming was done together on lands that they worked communally.

Hunting was limited to those in the upper class, and their prey included rabbit, turkey and deer. Zapotec houses were usually one-room with no windows and a pitched roof.

For entertainment and sport, Zapotecs played a game that combined aspects of modern-day basketball and soccer. On a large field, players used their bodies to move a ball and push it through a hoop that was on a wall on the side of the field, about four feet off the ground.

The Zapotec people had a highly structured society. The nobles had the most authority, followed by the priests, commoners, serfs and lastly, slaves. In the 14th century, the Mixtec (MIS-tek) people dominated the Zapotecs when they moved into their territory. The Mixtecs added their carvings, pottery, mosaics and statues to the ceremonial site at Monte Albán, and eventually, the Zapotecs adopted many of the Mixtec techniques and customs.

When the Aztecs spread their empire south, Monte Albán was abandoned. By the time the Spanish invaded the region in 1521, Monte Albán was deteriorating.

Region 6—Southeast

The Maya Lacandón

The Maya Lacandón (MY-ah-la-cahn-DOAN) people lived in the rainforests of southern Mexico. They used practically every tree, plant and shrub for food, shelter, clothing and medicine. They built canoes from mahogany trees, carved bows and arrows from branches, used the pitch from pine trees for lantern fuel, and made baskets and gourds from vines.

They also grew a variety of colors of cotton from which they wove their clothing. The men wore tunics that hung to their knees and the women wore tunics over their skirts.

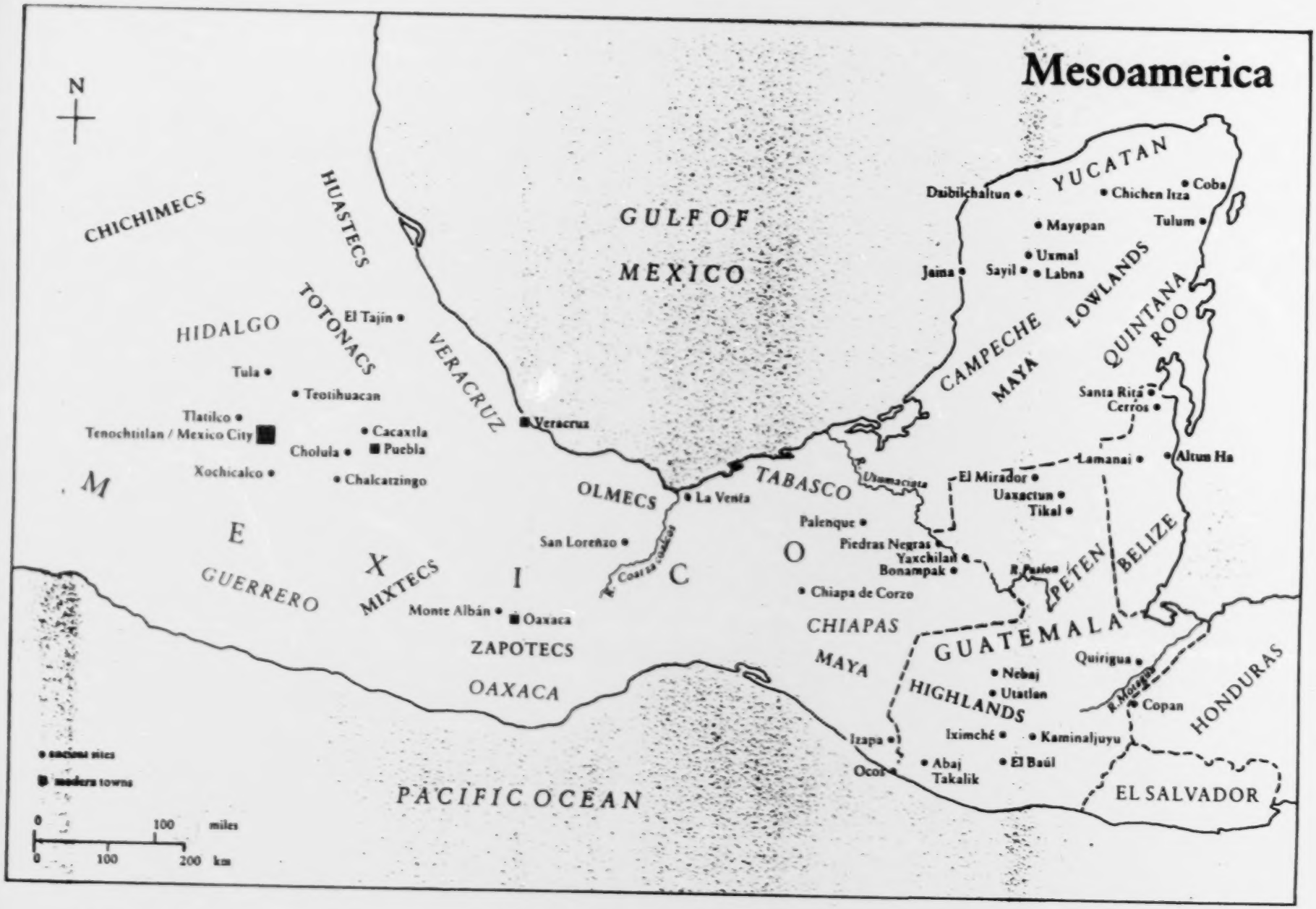
Agriculture was the economic base of this Mayan group and corn was the primary crop. The men spear-fished in the river and hunted deer and turkey with bows and arrows. The corn harvest was during the fall of each year. From the corn, women prepared tortillas, corn beverages and other dishes.

Also important was the harvest of squash, tomato, chili peppers and fruits such as avocados, bananas, papaya, lemons and oranges. They grew cocoa beans from which they made a chocolate drink.

In the villages, houses were built in rectangular fashion supported at the base by five or six logs. The roof was made from palm tree branches. Because of the hot climate, they didn't always build walls, but if they did, they used bamboo lashed together with handmade ropes. The cooking area was inside the house. Along the interior walls, they hung hammocks they wove and used for sleeping.

Before the arrival of the Spanish, the Lacandón people lived in villages surrounding ceremonial centers, such as Palenque (pah-LEN-kay). Their art was primarily created for healing ceremonies. The most common art pieces were containers for burning incense.

The Lacandón shared their territory with other Mayan groups. In 1536, the Spanish invaded much of the Mayan territory and tried to convert the people to Christianity. However, their efforts were continuously frustrated by the Lacandón, who moved further into the rainforest, settled there and remained basically untouched by the Spanish. In 1586, a military expedition attacked Lacandón towns, torching them and massacring many people.



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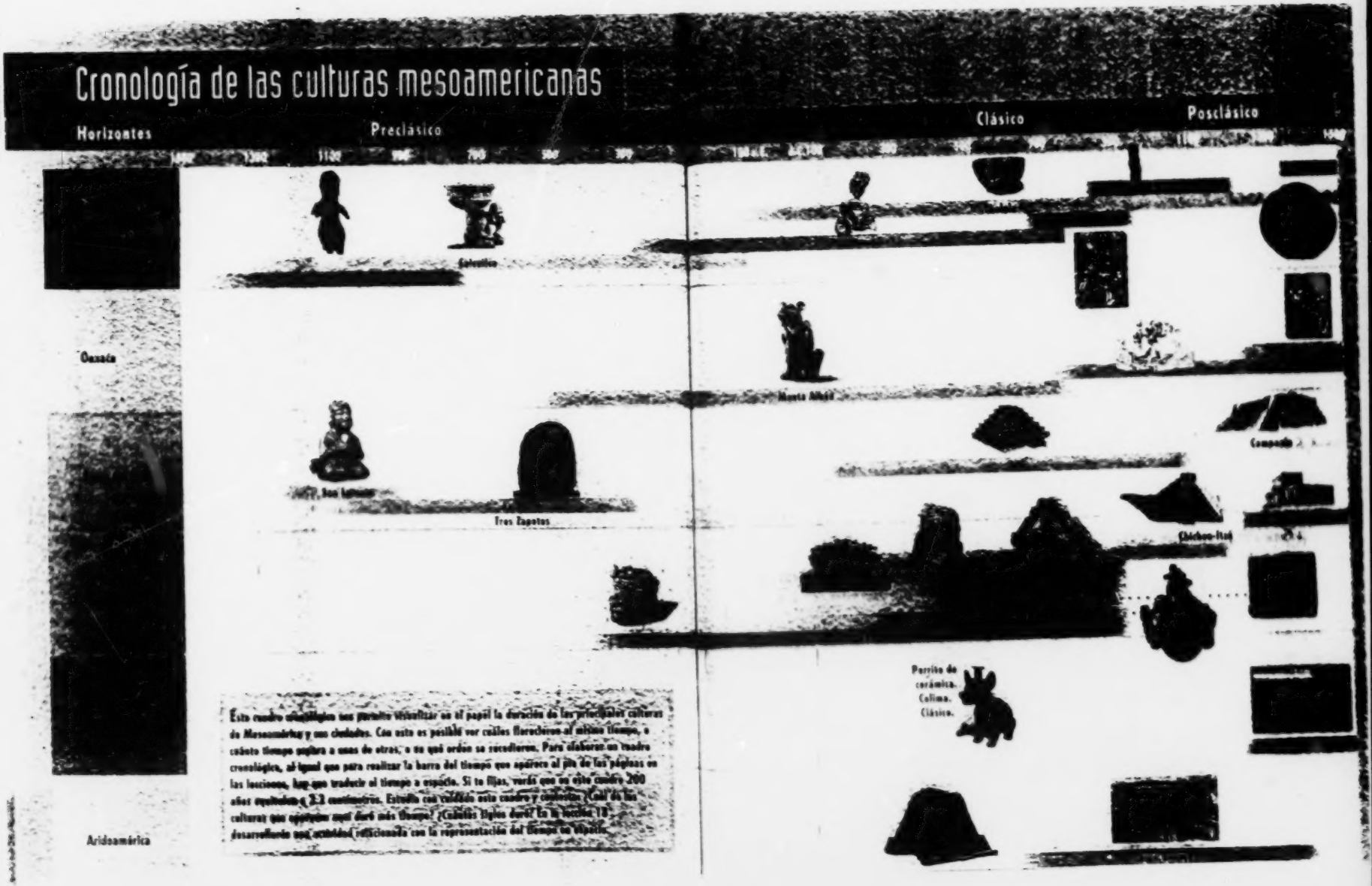
Cronología de las culturas mesoamericanas



Este cuadro cronológico nos permite visualizar en el papel la duración de las principales culturas de Mesoamérica y sus ciudades. Con esto es posible ver cuáles florecieron al mismo tiempo, o cuánto tiempo vivió una a otras, o en qué orden se sucedieron. Para elaborar un cuadro cronológico, al igual que para realizar la barra del tiempo que aparece al pie de las páginas en las lecciones, hay que traducir el tiempo a espacio. Si te fijas, verás que en este cuadro 200 años equivalen a 2.2 centímetros. Estudia con atención este cuadro y contesta: ¿Cuál de las culturas que aparecen aquí duró más tiempo? ¿Cuántos siglos duró? En la lección 18 desarrollarás una actividad relacionada con la representación del tiempo en tiempo.

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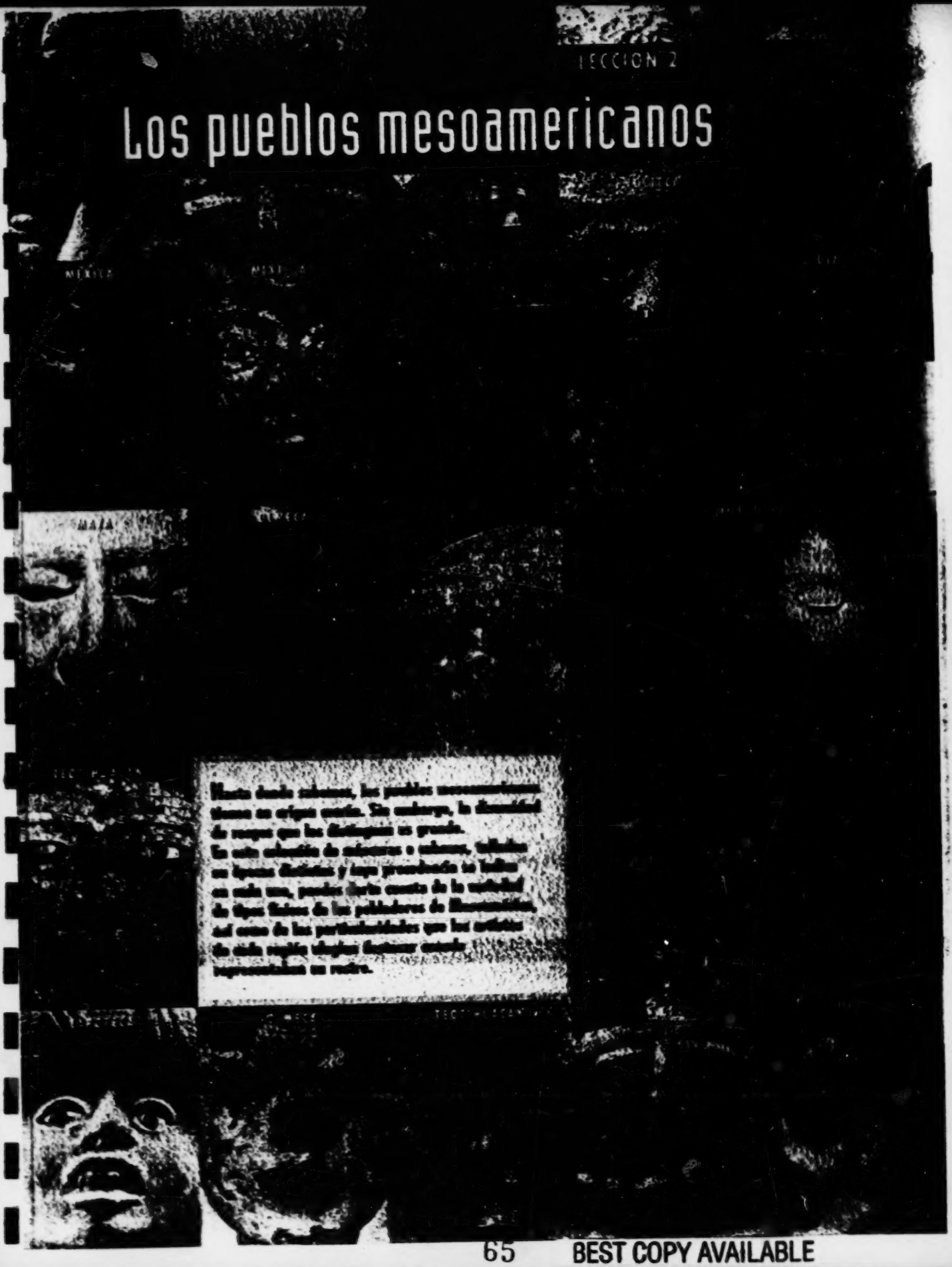
Los pueblos mesoamericanos



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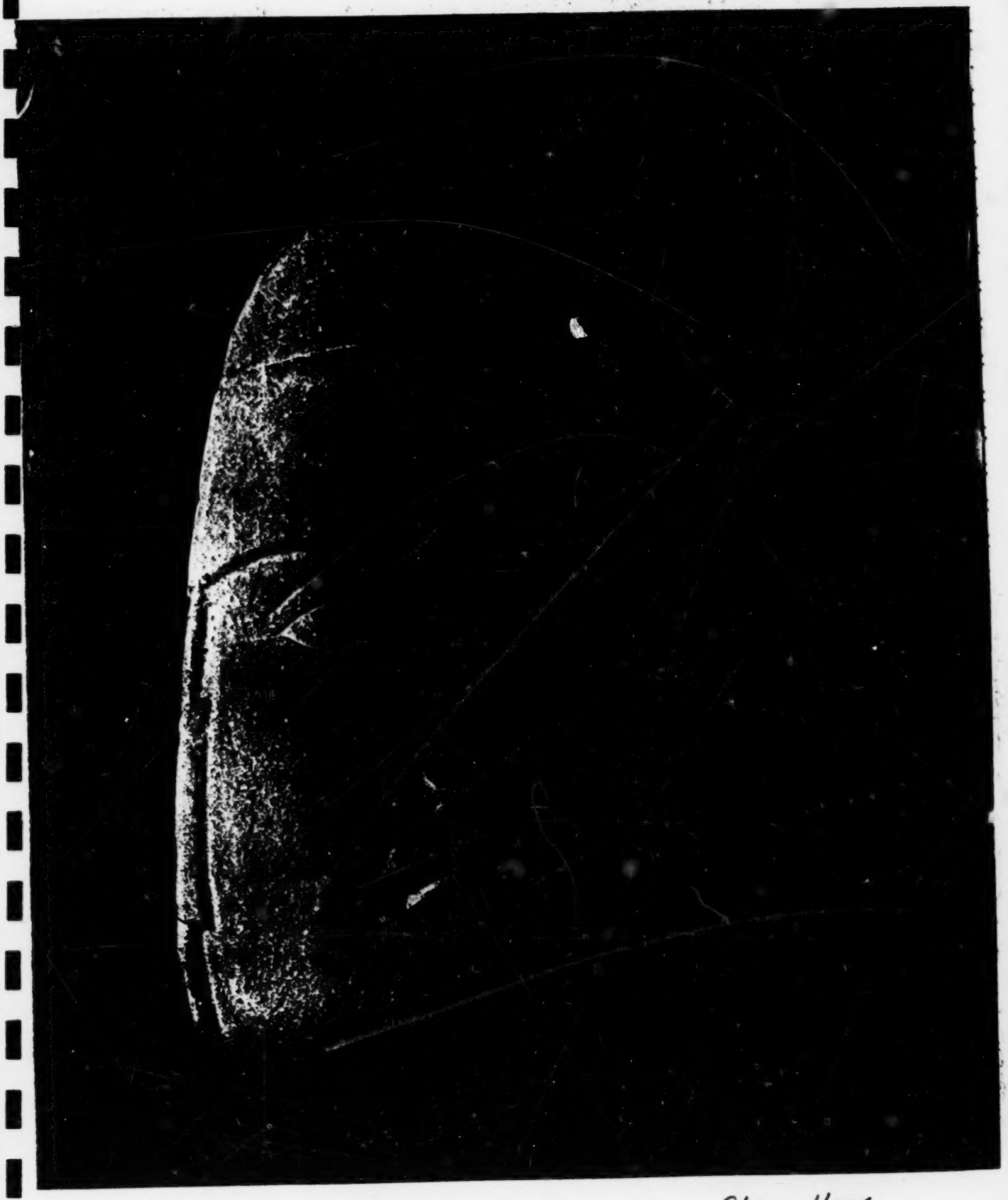

Olmec Head

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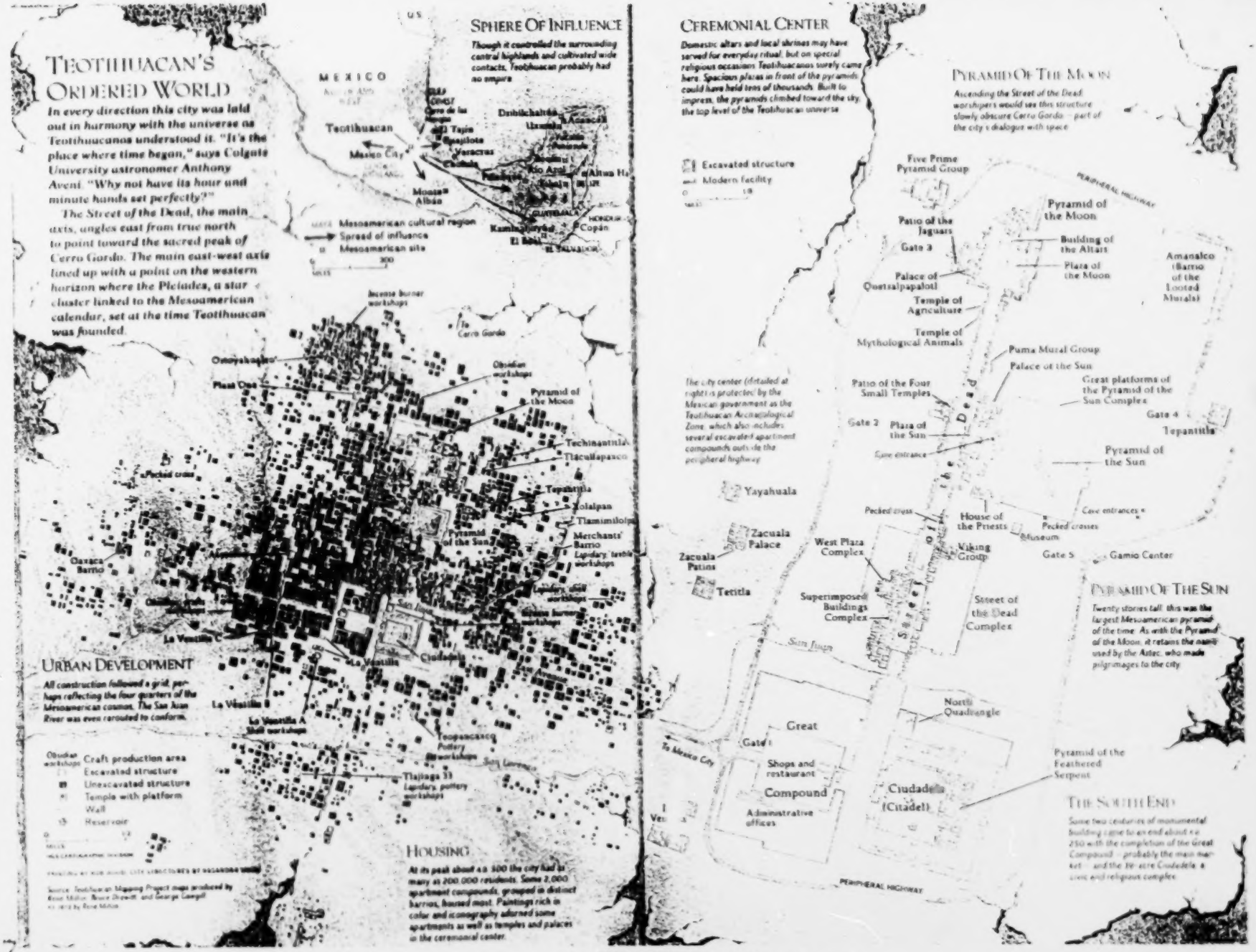
Teotihuacan's Ordered World
In every direction this city was laid out in harmony with the universe as Teotihuacanos understood it. "It's the place where time began," says Colgate University astronomer Anthony Aveni. "Why not have its hour and minute hands set perfectly?"
The Street of the Dead, the main axis, angles east from true north to point toward the sacred peak of Cerro Gordo. The main east-west axis lined up with a point on the western horizon where the Pleiades, a star cluster linked to the Mesoamerican calendar, set at the time Teotihuacan was founded.
Sphere Of Influence
Though it controlled the surrounding central highlands and cultivated wide contacts, Teotihuacan probably had no empire
MEXICO
Teotihuacan
Mexico City
Monte Albán
Kaminaljuyú
Copán
Mesoamerican cultural region
Spread of influence
Mesoamerican site
Ceremonial Center
Domestic altars and local shrines may have served for everyday ritual, but on special religious occasion Teotihuacanos surely came here. Spacious plazas in front of the pyramids could have held tens of thousands. Built to impress, the pyramids climbed toward the sky, the top level of the Teotihuacan universe
Excavated structure
Modern facility
Five Prime Pyramid Group
Pyramid of the Moon
Patio of the Jaguars
Gate 3
Building of the Altars
Plaza of the Moon
Amanalco (Barrio of the Looted Murals)
Palace of Quetzalpapalotl
Temple of Agriculture
Temple of Mythological Animals
Puma Mural Group
Palace of the Sun
Great platforms of the Pyramid of the Sun Complex
Gate 4
Tepantitla
Patio of the Four Small Temples
Gate 2
Plaza of the Sun
Cave entrance
Pyramid of the Sun
The city center (detailed at right) is protected by the Mexican government as the Teotihuacan Archaeological Zone, which also includes several excavated apartment compounds outside the peripheral highway
Yayahuala
Pecked cross
House of the Priests
Cave entrances
Museum
Zacuala Palace
Zacuala Patios
Tetitla
West Plaza Complex
Viking Group
Gate 5
Gamio Center
Superimposed Buildings Complex
Street of the Dead Complex
Pyramid Of The Sun
Twenty stories tall, this was the largest Mesoamerican pyramid of the time. As with the Pyramid of the Moon, it retains the name used by the Aztec, who made pilgrimages to the city.
North Quadrangle
Great Gate
Shops and restaurant
Compound
Administrative offices
Ciudadela (Citadel)
Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent
The South End
Some two centuries of monumental building came to an end about A.D. 250 with the completion of the Great Compound — probably the main market — and the Ciudadela, a civic and religious complex.
Peripheral Highway
To Mexico City
Pyramid Of The Moon
Ascending the Street of the Dead worshipers would see this structure slowly obscure Cerro Gordo — part of the city's dialogue with space
Urban Development
All construction followed a grid, perhaps reflecting the four quarters of the Mesoamerican cosmos. The San Juan River was even rerouted to conform.
Obsidian workshops
Craft production area
Excavated structure
Unexcavated structure
Temple with platform
Wall
Reservoir
Source: Teotihuacan Mapping Project maps produced by René Millon, Bruce Drewitt, and George Cowgill
Housing
At its peak about A.D. 500 the city had as many as 200,000 residents. Some 2,000 apartment compounds, grouped in distinct barrios, housed most. Paintings rich in color and iconography adorned some apartments as well as temples and palaces in the ceremonial center.

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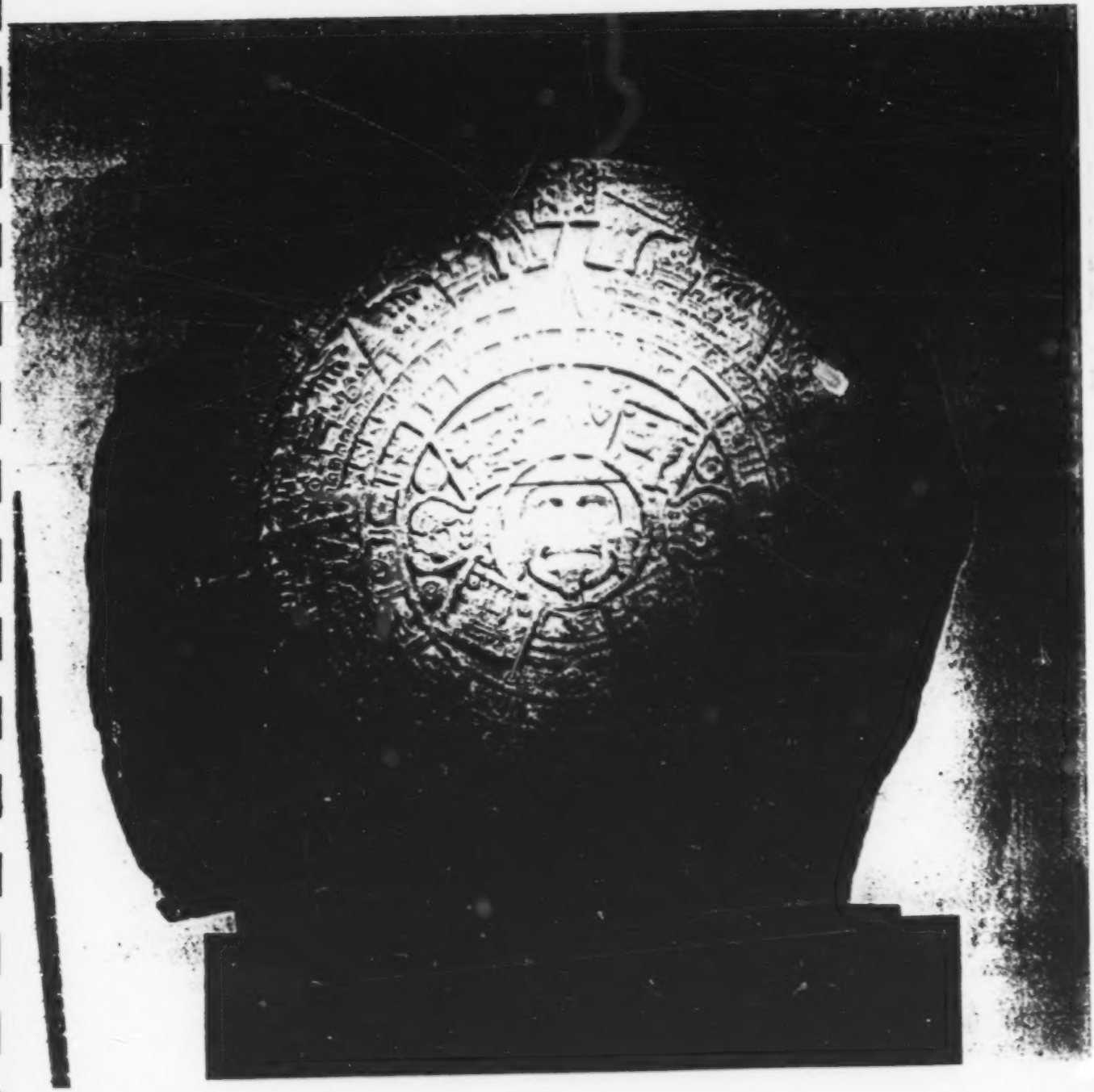

Aztec Calendar Stone

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Imagen de Kukulcán o de un sacerdote ataviado con sus símbolos, entre los cuales se encuentra el pectoral en forma de tarascol cortado. Cerámica maya del norte de Yucatán. Preclásico. Museo Regional de Antropología del INAH. Palacio Cantón. Mérida, Yucatán.

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